

ANGLO- SOVIET JOURNAL

Special Double Number

C O N T E N T S

The Work of the Writer
Originality & Inspiration in Music
Comedies Yet Unborn

Ilya Ehrenburg
Aram Khachaturian
Grigori Alexandrov

AND

Making Life Easier for Soviet Citizens
The District Procurator
The Art of the Dance

Andrew Rothstein
V. Pomerantsev
V. Kamenev (*Illustrated*)

AND BOOK REVIEWS, ETC.

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Organ of the Society for Cultural Relations with the USSR

MAKING LIFE EASIER FOR SOVIET CITIZENS

I

A DECISION of the Soviet Government last summer made a change of the first importance in the direction of the economic development of the USSR. This was to organise “a sharp rise in the production of consumer goods”, while continuing to develop the heavy industries and transport.

Eighteen months ago it was pointed out in this journal that in the First Five-year Plan (1929-32) there had been a big divergence between the annual rates of increase in output of the means of production and output of consumer goods respectively—39% and 22%. By the time the Third Plan had been reached (1938-42) the gap had been narrowed to 17% and 11%—or would have been, if the war had not upset all peaceful planning. In the Fifth Plan, which began in 1951, the divergence was narrower still—13% and 11%. Now a further step has been taken.

“Hitherto”, said G. M. Malenkov at the Supreme Soviet of the USSR on August 8, 1953, “we have had no possibility of developing light industry and the food industry at the same rate as heavy industry. At the present time we can—and therefore we must—in the interests of ensuring a more rapid increase in the material and cultural standards of life of the people, promote by every means the development of light industry.”

It was essential, he said, considerably to increase State investments in the development of the light and food industries and of agriculture, and to raise the targets of output laid down for these industries. The Fifth Five-year Plan provided for a 65% increase in output of consumer goods between 1950 and 1955; this figure could be reached much sooner.

“The urgent task lies in raising sharply in two or three years the provision for the population of foodstuffs and manufactures, meat and meat products, fish and fish products, butter, sugar, confectionery, textiles, clothing, footwear, crockery, furniture, stationery and other household goods.”

After this speech, in which the Soviet Premier outlined a broad programme of measures in industry, agriculture and trade to achieve this object, there followed a series of sectional plans, developing different sides of the programme in very great detail—for the further development of agriculture (September 7), for the further development of cattle-breeding (September 26), for increased production of vegetables (September 29), for further improvement in the work of the State Machine and Tractor Stations (October 1), for the further development of trade (October 17), for increased output of manufactured consumer goods (October 28) and foodstuffs (October 30).

These massive programmes reached out into every corner of the Soviet economy, providing for a multitude of auxiliary measures which would not come to mind at first sight of the production or trading targets—for example, tax rebates to the peasantry (13 milliard roubles), and a reduction in State loans (16 milliards), which thus added to the increased spending-power provided in 1953 by the heavy spring cuts in prices (about 50 milliards). The additional capital expenditure involved was very considerable—nearly 6 milliard roubles in the consumer goods industries in 1954 (as against just over 3 milliards in 1953): 8.5 milliard roubles in 1954 in the food industries (4.8 milliards were invested in 1953): 1.7 milliard roubles in 1954 in the home trade machinery (against 0.75 milliards in 1953).

The programme of aid to the peasants went far beyond tax rebates, however. It included (i) altering the date of delivery of cattle to the State for slaughtering, so as to relieve the collective farmers of unnecessary waste of fodder ; (ii) material encouragement to them to increase the number of livestock on their family allotments ; (iii) reduced quotas for deliveries to the State of collective farmers' output of potatoes and vegetables ; (iv) much higher prices paid by the State for the meat, milk, dairy produce, eggs, etc., procured from the collective farmers—whether as compulsory deliveries or by the higher-priced voluntary sales—without raising retail prices ; (v) much material help in securing building materials and machinery, and many other measures. Similar programmes apply to the production of industrial raw materials such as cotton, wool, leather, etc.

These are but some of the indications of the increased speed at which the needs of the Soviet citizen as consumer were to be met. The general effect was to provide that the volume of retail trade in 1954 was to be 72% above the 1950 level : whereas under the Fifth Five-year Plan, adopted a year before, it was to be 70% above the 1950 level only in 1955. And in that year—the last of the Fifth Plan—retail trade is now to be double the 1950 volume.

Trade Minister Mikoyan, in a speech on October 17 introducing the new proposals, made some telling comparisons with the past, remote as well as recent :

“ In 1953 the population will have had nearly 2.6 times as much butter sold to it through State and co-operative channels as in 1940 . . . State industry will produce 560,000 tons of butter in 1955, and 650,000 tons in 1956. In 1913 all the registered industry of Tsarist Russia produced 104,000 tons of butter, and of this half was exported abroad.” (It should be noted that this butter produced in State dairies is exclusive of that consumed by the collective farmers, and of the surplus which they deliver to the State or sell in collective-farm markets.)

“ We are now producing nearly three times as much sugar as in pre-revolutionary Russia, and in 1956 will be producing four times as much . . . ”

A passage in his speech of particular interest to British people was the following : “ I should say a few words about imports of mass consumer goods. In recent years we have begun to make use of this supplementary source of supply. We have grown richer, and can allow ourselves the importing of such foodstuffs as rice, grapefruit, bananas, pineapples and herrings, and such manufactured goods as high-quality woollen and silk fabrics, furniture and some other commodities which add to variety. These commodities are in good demand among our people.

“ We are buying abroad a total of 4 milliard roubles' worth* of consumer goods for the people this year, to two-thirds of the value from the People's Democracies. In turn we are exporting some consumer goods of which we have a surplus, and are helping the People's Democracies with some consumer goods.”

II

How are these programmes getting on ?

The annual report on fulfilment of the State Plan, published on January 31, contains some striking replies to this question. While capital investments in the whole of the national economy went up by 4% in 1953, compared with the previous year, they increased by 8% in the light and food industries, and

* The exchange rate is 11.2 roubles to the £.

in the second half of the year by 10% in these industries, as compared with 1952. The record of acceleration is thus precise.

The election manifesto of the Central Committee of the Communist Party (February 11) took it farther. "A start has now been made on the construction of many hundreds of textile, leather and footwear factories and also enterprises for the food industry. During 1953 alone, some 300 new enterprises producing consumer goods were put into operation. Existing enterprises in the light and food industries are being enlarged and equipped with the latest machinery."

In a recent visit to the Belorussian Soviet Socialist Republic, the present writer and some colleagues were told by Mrs. A. F. Nichipor, Deputy Minister of the Consumer-Goods Industry, how this works in her field—which covers leather, boot and shoe, textile, hosiery, garment, haberdashery and carpet manufacture. "Our capital investments in 1954 will be double those of 1953", she said. "We are building ten new factories in the next three years, and completely reconstructing and extending ten others." She added that 30% of the total funds for this purpose go to housing for the workers to be employed in the new factories, and 8-10% on safety and health equipment in them. Mr. K. N. Dlugoshevsky, chairman of the Minsk City Soviet, told us that, so far as the Belorussian capital is concerned, new factories will manufacture woollen suitings, other clothing, watches and cameras, and will also include canneries and a mechanised bakery.

The report of the Central Statistical Department on plan-fulfilment in 1953 also gave instructive data on new trends in output. "The branches of industry producing consumer goods, in the course of 1953 and particularly during the second half of the year, developed at a higher rate than in 1952, and at a higher rate than was originally provided for by the plan for 1953. Whereas in 1952 the output of these industries increased by 10.5%, in 1953 output increased by 12%, and in the second half of 1953 the increase was 14%, as compared with the second half of 1952." Here too, therefore, there was noticeable acceleration. Some illustrations of this as it applied to particular articles :

	Percentage Increase in Output.	
	Over the whole year. Compared with 1952.	July-December 1953. Compared with second half 1953.
Clocks and Watches ...	22	29
Bicycles	15	22
Radio Sets	27	62
Domestic Refrigerators	59	86
Metal Bedsteads ...	45	65

Moreover, there was a higher increase in output of the better-quality articles, e.g. worsteds (76%), pure wool knitted goods (12%), best footwear (44%), gateaux and pastries (28%), etc., than in the output of the general class of commodity to which they belonged, e.g. woollen textiles (9%), knitwear (3%), footwear generally (4%), confectionery (9%).

We were able to confirm these general trends for ourselves during a visit to the Kaganovich boot and shoe factory at Minsk. Here is a factory which was turning out 10,000 pairs a day in 1940, was totally demolished by the Germans on their evacuation of the city in July 1944, produced 11,000 pairs a day last year, and in 1954 is to produce 15,000 a day : in 1955 the daily output is to be 22,000 pairs. Moreover, the turn to stylish shoes began here in 1950 :

in the last two years their output has doubled. We came into the director's room just after a conference of technicians and active trade unionists on 1954 styles had ended : the sample pairs, many of them of considerable elegance and reasonable price, were ranged all round the conference table.

" We send delegations to other older factories to study their methods, and we invite their technicians and skilled workers to lecture to our workers ", said the director. " We have our own show cases in the shops to display our new styles, and suggestion boxes where the customers can put their criticisms. The workers themselves are making many innovations in the production process, although it was hard for them at first to master the new machinery."

Mrs. Nichipor had mentioned that 1951 output of footwear in Soviet Belorussia was more than one-third above that of 1940—even though nearly all the boot and shoe factories of this Republic were destroyed in the war—and that by 1956 it is to go up by 150%. She gave similar figures for the woollen, linen, hosiery and other light industries.

In agriculture noticeable improvements took place even within the first few months. Over 100,000 agronomists and livestock experts were returned from offices to the land to help the collective farmers, and 23,000 mechanics and engineers went from industry into the State machine and tractor stations which service the collective farms. Autumn ploughings were some 32,000,000 acres bigger than the previous year. The net increase in livestock herds was so big that the targets fixed for 1954, only a few months previously, could be raised considerably. The State was able to buy 13% more meat and 22% more vegetables than in 1952.

III

IT IS, of course, legitimate to ask whether these commodities are reaching the broad mass of the public. The report of the Central Statistical Department for 1953, already quoted, shows that State and co-operative retail sales to the population, which had increased by 10% in 1952, went up by 21% in 1953—and that in the second half of the year they were 26% above those of the same months of 1952. Similarly in the countryside, where retail trade is in the hands of the consumer co-operatives, there was a marked increase in the second half-year (30%, as against 24% over the year as a whole.)

Thus the same quickening process can be seen in the sphere of distribution as showed itself in capital investment and in production.

Of the many figures given in the report showing increased sales of consumer commodities, the following is a representative selection :

<i>Foodstuffs</i>	<i>Manufactured Goods</i>
Meat 36%	Cotton piece goods ... 22%
Butter 36%	Woollen textiles ... 18%
Cheese 28%	Silks 45%
Sugar 23%	Clothing 29%
Eggs 16%	Leather footwear ... 29%
Tea 16%	Furniture 39%
Vegetables 25%	Clocks and watches 38%
Fruit 43%	Sewing machines ... 34%
Confectionery ... 12%	Radio sets 32%

These bigger sales were due not only to the supplies being available, but also to the increased purchasing-power of the public. The total year's increase in income of both workers and peasants is estimated at 13%.

"We spent fifty to sixty per cent of our earnings on food two years ago", said a drilling machine operator at the Minsk Auto Works to me in December 1953. "Now my wife and I find we are spending not much more than forty per cent, and on a wider variety of food. What is the result? We have more to spend on clothes and furniture."

At the works canteen I was able to get one documentary piece of evidence of this substantial improvement in the workers' budget in the shape of the day's menu, which could be compared with the similar menu I had taken away from the canteen of the Kolomna locomotive works in November 1950. Both establishments were in the heavy industry group; each had over 10,000 workers. Here is a table of some prices:

<i>Dish</i>	<i>Weight in grammes</i>	<i>Price 1950</i>	<i>Weight in grammes</i>	<i>Price 1953</i>
Vegetable salad ...	150	70 kop.	200	37 kop.
Herring with gar- nish	50 25	1 r. 85 kop.	60 25	1 r. 42 kop.
Borshch with sour cream and meat	550 25	2 r. 60 kop.	550 25	1 r. 15 kop.
Giblet soup with sour cream ...	550	1 r. 45 kop.	550	1 r. 12 kop.
Beef cutlets with mashed potatoes	300	3 r. 05 kop.	300 <i>also</i> carrots and cucumber	1 r. 65 kop.
Sausages with baked cabbage ...	100 150	3r. 40 kop.	250 <i>also</i> mashed potatoes	1 r. 36 kop.
Meat balls with buckwheat ...	250	2 r. 55 kop.	300	1 r. 97 kop.
Rump steak with fried potatoes ...	75 150	3 r. 70 kop.	Steak 75 Fried potatoes 200 Cucumber 50	2 r. 64 kop.
Sweet tea	200	20 kop.	200	16 kop.

It must be mentioned that the works menu at Minsk (more so than at Kolomna) was much more varied than this comparative table might suggest. It included ten cold dishes (including fried fish, roast goose, beef rissoles), five soups, twenty meat and vegetarian entrees, and five third dishes. Moreover, the average worker was earning here from 900 to 1,000 roubles, and paying thirty to forty roubles a month for his rent, including lighting and heating. Thus

there need be no reasonable doubt that the menu was not being duplicated just for show purposes ! The prices were well within his reach ; for about three roubles he could have a most substantial daily dinner, and he could well afford it.

At the Beslan maize processing plant, a very modern establishment of some 2,000 workers in North Ossetia, we were able to see what workers could spend their increased surpluses on. The general stores—controlled by the district department of trade—had well-stocked perfumery, book, textile, clothing and hardware departments. Its turnover—400,000 roubles a month—represented some 15-20% of total earnings at the works ; and it had plenty of customers. Whereas a typical old grandma bought her six metres of bright cotton print at 8 roubles 80 kopeks a metre, the next customer, a young woman, quite obviously from her dress and speech an industrial worker, had a roll of pure silk brought down for her. We asked the manager which of these customers was the typical one. His reply was precisely what the qualitative analysis of 1953 output, mentioned earlier, might have led us to expect : “ It used to be cotton prints round here, but now fine woollens and linens go best.”

Elsewhere in North Ossetia—at the Stalin Collective Farm, Olginskoye village, Pravoberezhny district—we came across an example of the effect of the new financial policy, aimed at putting greater purchasing power in the pockets of the collective farmers. This farm of nearly 17,000 acres has a ten-field system of crop rotation, with a large variety of livestock ; and on much of the produce last autumn it began to earn a considerably larger income than before. Payments for total fixed deliveries to the State were several times larger than the previous year : for potatoes, for example, the payment was 12½ kopeks per kilogram as against 4 kopeks in 1952. There were big increases, too, in the much higher payments for voluntary sales to the State (i.e. by decision of the general members’ meeting, after the fixed deliveries), and the collective farm was able to secure a number of lorries, delivered at the time of the delivery of the produce—four in consideration of the sale of 300 tons of potatoes, a fifth against the sale of meat, another against sales of milk—without having to go through a lengthy procedure of ordering them after realising its produce. In addition to the six lorries there was a substantial payment in cash.

What difference were the changes making in the life of the collective farmers ? Over and above a great variety of cultural activities, the chairman of the rural Soviet drew our attention to two undertakings which had been voted for the year 1953-54 by meetings of the collective farmers in the autumn—the introduction of compulsory attendance for all children at their ten-year school, beginning this year, and the starting of a 6,000,000-rouble project for building a piped water supply to each house (at present they use wells fed by mountain springs). Peeping in at cottage windows as we walked through the village we saw undeniable signs of comfort—carpets and pictures, snowy linen, bookshelves, rows of crockery ; and the co-op stores (we visited one out of two) were full of customers. “ Our people can get all they want through us without going to town ”, said the manager with a certain pride. “ Suppose they want a piano ? ” he was asked. “ We ordered three pianos last month ”, he replied with a smile.

IV

IF the Soviet consumer is to get the commodities he requires quickly and cheaply, the retail trading network—well known to be really inadequate—has to be rapidly extended. Since the war 136,000 shops have been reopened or built, 19,000 of them in the last three years. Another 40,000 are to be built

and opened in 1954-56, Mikoyan announced in his speech of October 17. At the beginning of 1953 there were 106,000 public restaurants, canteens, cafes, and so on; 11,000 more are to be opened in the next three years. In 1953 there were 1,900 mechanised bakeries; by 1956 another 372 are to be at work. The number of collective farm markets is to rise in the next three years from under 8,500 to about 9,000.

Both Mrs. Nichipor at Minsk and Mayor Hoziev at Ordzhonikidze* (North Ossetia) drew our attention to the fact that, to ease the shortage, the ground floors of new housing blocks are in fact being earmarked for shops, and this we found pretty general, if not universal, in both these cities. At Moscow, on the eve of our departure, the new State Universal Stores were opened in the Red Square—in the building, well known since 1893 as “Upper Commercial Rows” or “Commercial Arcades”, which in capitalist times housed some 240 different firms, but now totally reconstructed with a lavish magnificence to which the style of the Moscow Metro and now the new university buildings is accustoming the Soviet citizen and the foreign visitor. There are 134 different sections in which 1,200 assistants are employed. Apart from serving the Moscow population, the new stores are to become a “trade university”, a training ground for commercial employees throughout the country.

Adequate training for upwards of three million employees in State and co-operative trade, indeed, occupied an important place in Mikoyan's report. He stated that the Ministry of Trade is taking over five higher educational institutions for the purpose, and Centrosoyus (the Soviet CWS) a sixth. In addition, many technical schools and long-term courses are being organised. A characteristic remark:

“It should be borne in mind that in conditions of competition, as sales difficulties increase, the bourgeois countries too have produced not bad model trading organisations, technique of trade, and civilised service of the customer—particularly the one who is well off.

“I cannot help condemning those comrades who, on the pretext of combating servility towards everything foreign, ignore the experience of foreign countries and have ceased to take an interest in it, to study it and make use of what would help us. While spreading far and wide the advanced experience of our best undertakings, we must at the same time study and take over from the best undertakings in capitalist countries what we need for the better organisation of trade and service to the customer. We should not turn up our noses at this valuable experience, but master it and use it in the interests of the mass of the people.”

It may be mentioned in this connection that at the All-Union Chamber of Commerce, where we were kindly received by the President, Mr. Mikhail Nesterov, who described its many-sided activities, a special pavilion of mass consumer goods houses a permanent display of foreign samples, including many from Great Britain.

Home trade in the new conditions is of such importance that the training and organisation of its personnel are not being left to those directly responsible—the Union and Republic Ministers of Trade, or the directors of the trading organisations. In a recent number of the *ANGLO-SOVIET JOURNAL* (Vol. XIV, No. 3), some details were given of the means used to draw the mass of the workers into supervision of canteens, shops and warehouses—through 600,000 “public controllers”, volunteers elected in their workshops for six months at a time, who give up some of their leisure to fulfil in turn this useful public function. At the Minsk Auto Works we were able to make the acquaintance of some of these volunteers.

Martinenko, a welder, has been elected with nine others in his shop. Under the general authority of the works committee, which provided him with

* Formerly Vladikavkaz.

a certificate of authorisation, he takes his turn at one of the municipal shops serving the works to see that the staff are polite to the customers, display their goods properly, give proper measure, and so on. He has the right to draw the staff's attention to misbehaviour, and to report obstinate cases to the works committee. In his work he is guided by the inspectors (full-time) of the Ministry of Trade.

Another "public controller" was Artemyev, a fitter working in the press shop, who was also elected by his fellow workers to supervise the canteen. "This is my duty day", he told us; and indeed, when later we had our meal in the canteen we saw his name in bold letters on a card inserted in a frame prominently displayed: *Comrades! The public controller today, December 15, is Comrade ——. Draw his attention to any irregularities.* We asked him his duties. They were (1) to be present when the provisions for the day were being handed over to the chief cook, (2) to check against the dietary what was going into the day's dishes, and the quantities, (3) to see that the customers got the right weights of food, (4) to see that the waitresses gave "civilised service", i.e. were polite, neat and alert. Had he had any complaints today? Yes, one worker had ordered goulash and had complained to him that there was too much bone in his portion. It had been weighed and found to be with no more bone than normally laid down; but rather than leave a customer dissatisfied the canteen manager had given the worker another portion, with less bone in it.

In this way, all over the Soviet Union, the people themselves are being induced to take part in the improvement of the machinery of distribution. There are plenty of difficulties and obvious shortages yet, of course. But the paramount determination to procure "a more rapid increase in the material and cultural standards of life of the people" is universally visible*, is coming more and more to the front, and given the continued reduction of international tension and the consolidation of European peace, of which Soviet citizens everywhere talked with us, will get its way.

Andrew Rothstein.

* As these lines are being written, news comes of yet further developments in the campaign for more foodstuffs and raw materials, decided by the Central Committee of the Soviet Union Communist Party on March 2. Grain production last year, in spite of adverse weather conditions, was close to that of 1952 (129 million tons): which itself was really 50% more *per head of population* than in 1907-13, when a large proportion of Russian grain was exported. But more is needed—for cattle fodder, for export, and to allow for bigger industrial crops. Within the next two years the area under grain in the eastern territories is to be increased by over 32 million acres, and output by 15-20 million tons; and elaborate programmes of measures to ensure it have been adopted. An appeal by the Moscow Komsomol for 100,000 volunteers to go to the new grain areas produced 400,000 offers in three weeks.

THE WORK OF THE WRITER

Ilya Ehrenburg

I RECENTLY received a letter from a reader, a young Leningrad engineer, who asks me: "How do you explain the fact that our literature is feeble and more pallid than our life? We got talking about this the other day and no one could answer. What comparison can there be between our Soviet society and Tsarist Russia? And yet the classics wrote better. There are of course some books that one reads with interest, but there are many that make one wonder why they were written. They seem to have everything, and yet something is lacking, the book fails to catch the heart-strings, and people are not shown as they really are..."

I have often heard similar opinions, and I should like to share my thoughts on the work of the writer. What I am going to say is naturally subjective and based on my personal experience. Soviet writers are united in their love for our Socialist society and faith in its future, but we write about different things and in different ways. Each of us has his own experience. All writers will probably agree with some of my thoughts, but many will not agree with much that I have to say. Mayakovsky had occasion to say once: "I can produce no rules to make a person a poet. There are in fact no such rules."

There are no rules by which one can become a novelist, either. I have not the least intention of constructing a theory or of giving advice, for this would be both conceited and stupid: different writers come by varied paths to literature, write differently and experience the creative process in a variety of ways. I simply want to explain my own understanding of my work.

The writer of the letter is of course right to say that our reality is more brilliant and more forceful than our literature. We have today neither a Leo Tolstoy nor a Saltykov-Schedrin, neither a Chekhov nor a Gorky. (This is not to say we have not excellent writers and successful novels.) It is not a matter of nature or "fate" producing an outcrop of geniuses in one epoch and passing another by. To answer the Leningrad engineer's question something must be said about the nature of the writer's work.

The amateur photographer clicks his camera: a thousandth of a second is sufficient to record a person's outward form, walking or even running, on an emulsion sensitised to light. The painter seats his model and spends a long time studying the person's face, searching the features to find a reflection of character and inner life. The writer in his work is like the painter. He studies his heroes attentively.

It was much easier for our great predecessors to work than it has been for us. They were describing a society which changed much more slowly. It is true that Saltykov-Schedrin lived through an epoch of reforms and reflected social changes in his books. But there were no profound spiritual upheavals in the kingdom of the Pompadours or the Golovlev families.*

The heroes and heroines of the early Chekhov stories appear in his last works also: the style of the author had altered but the patterns were the same.

Our society is being built before our very eyes. Many books by hale and hearty authors, who are by no means old yet, have been on burning issues of the day and have been historic without suffering artistically: *The Rout*,† for example, or *Virgin Soil Upturned*.‡ People change, their mutual relations

* *The Golovlev Family* is the title of a novel by Schedrin depicting the mid-nineteenth-century merchant class in Russia.

† The first novel written by Alexander Fadeyev, author of the famous *Young Guard*.

‡ A novel on collectivisation, by Mikhail Sholokhov.

and their psychology change. The heroes of the Great Patriotic War* differ from the heroes of *Chapayev*† or *The Iron Flood*.‡ The students of today have little in common with the *Rabfak*§ students of 1925.

Even feelings which had formerly appeared immutable change with astonishing speed, and the emotions of lovers in our day differ from the emotions of young men and women at the time of the First Five-year Plan [1928-32—*Ed.*]

Tolstoy, Turgenev, Goncharov, Chekhov knew very well what their heroes would feel like in all circumstances, and how they would behave. For the Soviet writer to comprehend the thoughts and feelings of his rapidly changing contemporaries is harder.

The picture of an already coherent society shown or merely described by the writer cannot be offset against that of a society still being built and without any historical precedent, in whose creation the writer is himself a participant.

Spontaneously the question arises: how are the writers in bourgeois society writing now? Their task would seem simple: to show a world bedraggled but still in existence. It must be said that the current literature of the West is astoundingly poor: this is said even by favourably disposed critics in France, Britain and the United States.

Between the first and second world wars the great writers of last century were still producing first-rate work: Romain Rolland, Dreiser, Bernard Shaw, Knut Hamsun (his shameful end will not prevent us from remembering the value of his early novels), H. G. Wells, Roger Martin du Gard, John Galsworthy, Hauptman, Heinrich Mann, Pirandello. In the same period America produced a number of excellent novels, ruthless yet filled with humanity. Early works by Hemingway, Caldwell, Steinbeck and Faulkner astonished the reader by their sincerity and profundity. Some critics accused these authors of pessimism. Needless to say, there were then writers in the United States describing the struggle of progressive people against racism and greed for profit, against savagery and the violation of human dignity. Progressive views were and still are weak in America, however. The writers who were accused of pessimism described what they saw, offsetting their desperation against the patented smile of millions of Babbitts.

Finally, between the two wars, the writers of bourgeois Europe—Mauriac, Jules Romains, Moravia, Joyce and others—described in brilliant works the exhaustion and decay of capitalist society. Such books are no longer written in the West. Some of the authors listed are dead, others are silent, others again have become spiritually degenerate.

Between the two wars the writers of the bourgeois world realised that their society was doomed, but they still had the calm that is necessary even for lamentations. Their despair was still within bounds and could be regularised in art. Today the writers of the bourgeois West do not know what may await their heroes or themselves tomorrow. It is not easy to concentrate on the plan of a novel when your friends are saying that the atom bomb will be dropped within a year, when American soldiers are marching down one street and strikers down another. Some literary figures wax hysterical in the newspapers, others fall back on describing extraordinary occurrences of no possible interest save to the psychiatrist or the criminologist.

Such is the fate of writers in a society in decay. Yet in the bourgeois

* The Soviet Union's struggle against fascism, 1941-45, is thus called by Soviet people.

† A fictionalised biography by D. Furmanov of one of the great heroes of the Civil War, Chapayev, whose political commissar Furmanov was. English translation available.

‡ A book by A. Serafimovich on the Civil War in the Ukraine and the Crimea, 1918-20. English translation available.

§ *Rabfak*: special emergency courses for gifted young people who had not necessarily completed an ordinary secondary school education, set up in the 1920s as a temporary measure to prepare them quickly for the university.

countries there are excellent writers whose books reach a man's heart and give him what exists in neither the poor nor the rich countries of the West—hope. New books have found new readers. Is it not astonishing that in Latin America ordinary people are reading novels and poetry for the first time and that books by Latin-American writers are for the first time going round the world? Few are those in Europe who know the work of the poet Reuben Dario, and yet today there is no European who loves literature who has not read with interest the work of Neruda, Amadu and Gilien. Was there ever a single writer in Turkey known to peasants, miners and sailors, or was a single Turkish writer ever known outside his own country? And yet the poetry of Nazim Hikmet has found a way to the hearts of millions of people. Used the Renault workers to read Valéry's poetry? Yet today they read the poetry (and it is not easy poetry to grasp) of Eluard and Aragon. When representatives of official France wish to enhance their country's prestige abroad, they have to name these great writers. Since the war the work of the authors called in the United States "the writers of the doomed generation" has become tarnished, but the talent of Howard Fast has grown and developed. The writers I have named have broken with bourgeois society. Is this perhaps why they seem to me the best? No. Those I have named actually are the best. They have turned their faces to the future because they are spiritually greater than others.

There are readers in the West who confine themselves to detective novels or to the semi-sentimental, semi-dissolute rubbish with which various Readers' Digests regale them. In some countries there are many such readers, but no one would call them the heart, the conscience or the future of their peoples. Readers who work, create and think prefer real books.

Translations of our novels are successful in France and in the Scandinavian countries and in Latin America. This is not so much because of the manner of writing as because of what they are about.

I recently read a novel by a young but already well-known French writer. The hero of the novel is a young homosexual who marries an old woman for her money, and after the wedding night, which is described in great detail, goes off to his young sister and commits incest. It is easy to see why, after reading such a book, the French reader finds a breath of fresh air in *The Young Guard** or in *Harvest*.†

The twilight of the West is over. It was filled with vague shadows, giving rise to uneasy fears and gloom. Night has fallen now.

Each society has an epoch of artistic flowering, the triumph of harmony, an abundance of brilliant works. Such periods may be called the noonday. Soviet society is today living through early morning: to history, a few decades is but a brief hour. Our writers are like reconnaissance patrols. That is why we have as yet no Pushkin or Tolstoy. But we shall have them. Noon is yet to come.

There is no Balzac, Stendhal, Hugo, Flaubert or Zola in France today. Britain today has no Dickens, Byron or Shelley. Much will have to change in these countries before the hope of the birth of a new Dickens or Stendhal can arise there. For the present everything is behind them.

OPENING a novel in a room with drawn curtains, the reader begins what might be termed a long journey: it is not necessary for the heroes of the story to live in the same town or even perhaps in the same street. What is the reader striving for? What does he hope to discover in the book?

* By Alexander Fadeyev. This novel tells the story of a group of young people at Krasnodon in the Donbas, and the struggle they waged against the Nazis invaders. The leaders of the heroic group were killed by the Germans. A film, directed by Sergei Gerasimov, was made from the novel.

† A story of post-war adjustments and difficulties in a collective farm and the resolving of personal problems among the heroes, by Galina Nikolayeva.

The historical novel can undoubtedly extend the reader's knowledge, fill out the pages of history and bring it alive for him. One cannot study the times of Peter [the Great—*Ed.*] from A. N. Tolstoy's novel, but the book does give one the feel of Peter's epoch. A novel whose action develops in places unknown to the reader, or in circumstances with which he is unfamiliar, is of informative interest. It brings alive pages of geography, familiarises him with the details of a way of life he does not know. Nevertheless, however brilliantly described is the life of the Cossacks in *And Quiet Flows the Don*, however enchanting the scenery, they serve merely to help Sholokhov show the spiritual world of his heroes, and it is in Grigori's fate that the reader is absorbed.

For the purpose of understanding the stages in iron and steel production or present-day building methods, the reader is more likely to approach the specialist than the writer who has "got it up", that is the writer who has merely gained a more or less decent mastery of what the specialist has explained to him. An experienced agronomist will explain the achievements of agriculture better than a novelist, and a military theoretician will analyse the battle of Stalingrad or of the Kursk "bulge" more accurately than the most conscientious *belles-lettrist*.

There is one sphere alone where the writer should find his way better than his fellow citizens and contemporaries—man's inner world. The hero's outward form and the situation—the flat or the factory shop—in which he finds himself have to be described, but such descriptions are not so difficult. Such writing is a means, not an end.

Let us imagine a novel devoted to one Ivanov. [Ivanov is the Russian equivalent of Smith.—*Ed.*] Ivanov lives next door to the reader. His outward appearance and habits are no secret to the reader, who has often seen Ivanov, heard him speak at the meetings of active workers, and even perhaps visited him. Ivanov has nevertheless remained a familiar but unexplored territory. If the writer succeeds in showing what this remote neighbour thinks about, how he reacts to sorrow, how he works and loves, and what mistakes he makes, then the reader will feel enriched when he has finished the book. Having got to know Ivanov, he knows himself better.

Naturally, if this imaginary Ivanov is a metalworker, the writer will show him at the factory. Work is part of man's life, and in our society part of one's very existence. Here, then, the writer must understand metallurgical production, but it is in order to show Ivanov more clearly that he will describe the shop. He will not describe Ivanov merely in order to drag in a cutting lathe.

The reader feels that the writer has studied the world of human feelings more profoundly than himself, and has X-ray eyes. In opening a novel, the reader hopes to get to know his fellow workers, his contemporaries, friends and enemies better. He hopes to know himself and comprehend his own life more fully and accurately. No society could be more prejudiced and conventional than that described by Leo Tolstoy. Yet a worker from the Trekhgorka textile mills will weep over the sorrows of Anna Karenina. A loving heart's vulnerability and the power of motherhood are understandable to her. This old tale helps a young woman to look into the depths of her own heart. A woman reader of today picks up Tolstoy's novel not only to learn about the customs of a dead society but also to understand the complexity of living human feelings.

Lenin brilliantly expounded the social contradictions Tolstoy could not overcome. To Lenin Russia's path was clear. Tolstoy could not see this path. But it was not only to expose the helplessness of the Tolstoyan philosophy that Lenin read Tolstoy. The great writer helped him to comprehend man's inner world better.

I remember a young woman working at Trekhgorka speaking at a Soviet writers' congress. She "made a demand" on the writers. How was it that there

were no novels or stories describing the lives of women textile workers ? More than twenty years have passed since then. Yet that sort of book is not the most popular in factory libraries. Can it be that Levin and Vronsky interest women workers more than do people of today ? No. It would appear, however, that books picturing women textile workers do not show people. They picture looms. They do not show human feelings, only production processes.

TENS of millions of Soviet people know how steel is smelted, how selection produces new kinds of apple trees, how builders work on high buildings, yet many readers have no idea how novels are created. The psychology of artistic creation has received scant attention.

Do our critics perhaps, in analysing a writer's success or failure, throw light on questions related to the birth of a work of imagination ? No. Unfortunately serious critics and literary historians are still sadly lacking. Some reviewers divide books into two categories : worthy of a prize or requiring censure. In analysing a book in the first category, the critic usually tells us what it is about, as if we were seventh-class pupils [fifteen-year-olds.—Ed.], and at the end, to emphasise his independence and stave off any possible objections on the grounds of " overpraising ", lists inadequacies in the novel for which the author is to be reprimanded. In analysing a book which, in their view, requires censure, such critics turn into prosecutors. The novel may be unsuccessful and yet have been written with a good aim in view by the writer, whose honour as a citizen is not in question. They, however, regard it as practically a punishable offence. In speaking of such a book, the critics do not tell you about the contents. They cite examples torn from their context and use them as evidence.

Whether praising a novel or destroying it, such critics rarely dwell on the ties between the work under review and other books by the same author. They award marks like examiners, but make no attempt to explain the success or failure of the writer or to show how a work of imagination is born, how close are the links between the writer's character and all his work.

Never and nowhere has there existed such a lively interest both in literature and in writers as in the Soviet Union. There can surely hardly be a literary figure who fails to receive hundreds of letters from his readers. Do writers perhaps tell readers how their work came to be born ? Do they perhaps write about the books of other writers ? Knowing from their own experience how a work of imagination is conceived and born, could they not approach their fellow workers' books with neither pæans of praise nor indictments, and throw light on the sources of creation ? No. Rarely do we share with our readers either our own creative experience or our opinions on other people's books.

There are other critics whose articles offer the reader nothing but complaints. One author is complained of because he has not written anything for a long time, another because his war novel fails to show heroism in the rear, another again because his heroes are insufficiently happy or not bursting with self-confidence. Side by side with such articles the reader can read the assurances of some writers that they have " planned " novels devoted to some construction site or other, or some branch or other of industry, and that the editorial boards of the journals are sending the authors off on a *komandirovka** to write novels on various branches of the national economy.

* During the First Five-year Plan, a certain trend of thought felt that writers should go to some great new building-site on full pay to acquire " local colour " and then write a novel or stories about the site. Some first-rate reportage resulted and two well-known novels in this genre are still popular among Soviet readers, V. Katayev's *Forward, oh Time*, and Marietta Shaginyan's *Hydrocentral*. The view held today by Soviet writers is that a far more thorough understanding of the people involved is required than can be gained in a two months *komandirovka*. (See Alexei Surkov's article *The Writer and the Construction Schemes*, *ANGLO-SOVIET JOURNAL*, Vol. XIII, No. 1, Spring 1952.)

(I hasten to qualify this : there is no doubt in my mind on the value to the writer of visits and travelling. I only beg leave to doubt that a writer travelling with a note-book can "get up" a novel. Chekhov, having visited Sakhalin, wrote a book of sketches. What he saw during this trip enriched him, helped him to understand people better. But he did not return to the Sakhalin theme in his stories. A writer may be sent to Moldavia, to Yakutia, abroad. He is capable of making a first-rate job of being a journalist. Sketches are a difficult and important aspect of literature. But one cannot count on the writer returning with the spirit of a novel in his case when he is sent on a *komandirovka*. Sometimes a writer working on a novel needs to see some factory or city, but this is a mere additional detail compared with what moved him to begin work on the book.)

Thus the creation of works of imagination is taken to be akin to industrial production. As a customer is dissatisfied to see goods not to his taste or not to find cloth in the colours he wants, so readers are prepared to blame the writer for not describing some building site or other, for not bringing in people in a certain trade or for showing some feelings well but failing to show others at all.

In the epoch we live in, society is changing before our eyes and people are growing very rapidly : they do not all grow at the same pace, however, nor do they grow evenly. For this very reason any writer who has strayed into spiritual contradictions draws false conclusions about his heroes' behaviour. The mistakes of such a writer must be pointed out. The classics of Marxism have shown that this can be done without making critical articles sound like a trial.

Criticism should point out the mistakes made by another kind of writer, who explains everything his heroes do quite correctly, but fails to show the heroes. Work written with good intentions but not organic to the author, not dealing with facts he has lived through, is as a rule artistically weak. Such an author neither knows nor understands his heroes. His failure could be explained by any critic who cared to think about the psychology of creation.

A writer cannot write about all and sundry. He is limited both in his choice of subject-matter and in his choice of heroes. Every writer, even the greatest, has his limits. The creative work of a novelist is determined by the society he lives in. Everyone knows this today. But a writer's creative work is also determined by his own life, his experience of the world and his character.



THE Leningrad engineer was right to state that some novels and stories by our writers leave the reader unmoved. Criticism usually explains this away by weakness of artistic form. In my opinion the fault lies elsewhere.

We have writers whose books move their readers. Almost all these writers are good craftsmen. But even the books that leave the reader unmoved are not necessarily badly written. In the past ten years attention to form has been developing, and the level of the average novel or story is higher than the pre-war average of such works.

I once glanced through some sets of old pre-Revolutionary magazines and read several issues of *Russkoye Bogatsvo*, *Zhurnal dla Vsekh*, and *Sovremennyy Mir*. Chekhov, Gorky and Blok were alive then.

Dozens of average novelists and poets were published side by side with them. They wrote poorly and without skill. If you compare their skill with that of the average Soviet writer, you see that our writers write better.

I believe that the coldness noticed by my Leningrad correspondent in some works does not derive from a weakness of form, or at any rate not from weakness of form alone.

Answering a question on how to write well, Leo Tolstoy gave two valuable pieces of advice : a writer should never write about what does not interest

him personally ; and if a writer has thought of an idea for a book, but could just as easily not write it, then he had better give the idea up altogether.

A writer is not an apparatus which mechanically registers events. A writer does not write a book because he knows how to write, nor because he is a member of the Union of Soviet Writers and might be asked why he has not published anything for so long. A writer does not write a book because he has to earn a living. A writer writes a book because he has got to tell people something of his own, because he is "pregnant" with his book, because he has seen people, events, feelings, which he simply must describe. This is how impassioned books are born, and even if they sometimes have artistic shortcomings such books will undoubtedly move their readers.

This is why I cannot understand certain critics when they blame some author for not having written a novel on the Volga-Don Canal, on the textile industry or on the struggle for peace. Would it not be better to criticise some other author who *has* written a book, although it was not a spiritual necessity to him and he could just as easily not have written it ? Statistics do not play the role in art that they do in industrial production. It is surely true to say that one good novel is better than hundreds of bad ones. Novels do not burn away like coal, nor wear out like shoes.

Confused images might well be born in the head of a writer on an uninhabited island, but there would be no stimulus for him to write the book. A writer writes about people and for people.

The French writer Marcel Proust wrote his books in a room with sound-proof walls. Aesthetes often speak of this as an ideal. They forget that this same Proust had lived with people and had brilliantly studied the worldly society of France before he locked himself away in his cork-lined cell. Real literature has always been linked with social life, and talk of the isolation of the writer and the "ivory tower" did not arise in bourgeois society till it began to decay, when the novelists decided that the inventory of the world had come to an end and dreams would have to take the place of reality. (It might be added that their dreams, like everybody else's, also reflect reality, though in a distorted form.)

An artist's fantasy can alter the proportions in which occurrences, feelings or deeds are used, but any novel, even a fantastic or utopian tale, is based on reality. H. G. Wells's Martians or Capek's salamanders are parodies of human society. To create the fantastic Knight of the Doleful Countenance, Cervantes had to know his contemporaries to perfection. Outside reality there is not and cannot be any art.

Social environment determines the ideas, feelings, life and work of the writer : away from his environment and society he withers and dies as a creative being. Russian literature, perhaps more clearly than the literatures of the West, has always been linked with the people. It has very few examples of flight into social emptiness—a few followers-on of the post-Pushkin period, inferior poets and *belles-lettrists*, and a few of the Symbolists in their beginnings. (Many Symbolists subsequently strove to find ties with real life : this is particularly clear in the work of Alexander Blok, who started with *Verses on the Beautiful Lady* and came, through *Nemesis* and verse on Russia, to *The Twelve*.)

In socialist society the ties between writer and people not only exist, but are recognised. They have been described as carrying out an order, a social order. Some editors' and critics' conception of the epithet "social" has, however, grown somewhat diffuse. All that remains is the businesslike word "order", hardly suited to the work of a writer. In pre-revolutionary times life was hard for a writer, and in Chekhov's letters one may find mention of the fact that the editorial board of a newspaper or magazine had "ordered" a short story from him. But even the most arrogant editors never went so far as

to suggest a subject for a story to Chekhov. Can one imagine Tolstoy or Gorky being ordered to write *Anna Karenina* or *Mother* ?

There can hardly be a writer so colourless and so utterly indifferent that he has to be prompted on what he should write about. In any event, who needs books that have been born not from an author's travail but from allocations made by a journal's editorial board ? If an author ignores Tolstoy's advice and writes of what does not move him personally, his work will be incapable of moving the reader. The result will be a book in which all the requisites are present, as my Leningrad correspondent has it—a beginning, a successful ending, the necessary conflict and even a plot—but which lacks heart and is incapable of enriching the most well-disposed reader.



THE DEFENDERS of bourgeois ideology accuse Soviet writers and the progressive writers of the West of tendentiousness. I looked in a French dictionary and read that tendentiousness means "inclination towards something". It is quite natural for a writer, like everyone else, to love one thing and hate another. If he is in any way distinguishable from his contemporaries, it may well lie in the sharpness of his feelings rather than in their deadening. The writer may be inclined towards justice, wisdom, brotherhood : he may be inclined to social inequality, gloom or national arrogance, proclaiming his true inclinations to be an aristocracy of spirit, religious feeling or patriotism.

Dante lived with the passions of his contemporaries and participated in political struggle, and wrote a great deal of verse on it. Tendentiousness did not hamper, but rather it helped him, in the creation of the *Divine Comedy*, which moves us too, although the civil strife of the thirteenth century is long since past.

Goya painted the shooting of Spanish partisans by Napoleon's soldiers. This is one of the most tendentious and most brilliant paintings in the world. Some seventy years ago, the great French painter Edouard Manet painted a picture showing the Emperor Maximilian being shot by Mexican rebels. Was the subject-matter perhaps suggested not by civil strife but by Manet's love for classical Spanish painting and, in particular, by his love for Goya's work ? Whatever the background, Manet's painting does not move us, although it has all the fine painting qualities of this outstanding craftsman. Goya was tendentious in his work. He hated the foreign troops and was proud of the valour of the partisans. Manet's feelings are not clear to us. Perhaps he was on the side of the rebels, perhaps he was sorry for Maximilian. He depicted an event but did not disclose his attitude to it, and this explains the coldness of his canvas.

Bryusov in his youth set forth a programme for "pure art", opposing it to tendentiousness. He wrote : "All thoughts are close to me, all speech is dear to me and I dedicate my verse to all the gods." In that period Bryusov, the author of *Roads and Cross-roads*, did not move the reader. The critics argued whether he was a poet or not. Many asserted that he lacked poetic gifts. In my opinion, Bryusov's poetic gifts were no less than those of some other poets whose poetry readers have kept beside them throughout their lives. The reader's indifference to the pre-revolutionary Bryusov is explained by his own indifference to life, which arose not from his character, but from his aesthetic concepts. The man who kneels to all gods without believing in a single one of them is like the man who says he loves all women. He loves none of them.

The great Russian writers of the nineteenth century were not afraid of the passions that are today called tendentiousness. Is it not clear which side Tolstoy's sympathies are on when he describes the 1812 campaign ? Can there be any doubts as to the loves and hates of the author of *Notes of a Huntsman* ? Did Saltykov-Schedrin try to maintain neutrality between the Russian people and the stupid, dishonest, heartless upper rank of Russian society ?

All Mayakovsky's creative work is tendentious, from the book *As Simple as Mooing* to his very last poems. There was a discussion on the work of this great poet recently. I must say, quite frankly, that I read the reports of these debates with astonishment. Some recommended that all poets should write as Mayakovsky did. (It seems to me that to be a Mayakovsky follower-on is no newer or bolder than to be a Nekrasov follower-on.) Others in this discussion said that *how* Mayakovsky wrote was not important, but *what* he wrote was. Others again sought to prove that Mayakovsky did not write as he did. It should be said that Mayakovsky created a new form for a new content and his first books are organically connected with his subsequent work.

While Bourlyuk may have felt futurism to be an aesthetic tendency, the young Mayakovsky saw in it an attack on the morality, the philosophy and the aesthetics of a society he hated. One may have doubts about the effectiveness of the weapon, but not about the heart of the poet, which was always great and passionate.

A writer does not write to amuse himself or to become famous. He seeks to make people better and life greater. For him books are a moral weapon in this struggle.

I do not mean by this that the writer must come out in front of the foot-lights of his novel and painstakingly explain to the reader his attitude to his heroes or the events he describes. For me, the tendentiousness of a novel lies in its fervour. A writer inspired by great ideas understands that society is developing, he sees that some characters are good and alive, others bad and doomed.

Fervour in a writer does not mean mere naive and futile prejudice. To hate greed, humbug and hypocrisy does not mean eliminating every human trait in the miser, the humbug or the hypocrite. The world cannot be depicted in two colours, either black or white. Hatred, like love, is focused on real live people, not abstract concepts.

A consciousness of historic processes and a clear comprehension of mankind's future broadens rather than narrows the progressive writer. A novel of Robert Merle's has recently been published in France called *Death Is My Trade*. The writer describes the life of a fascist who became the commandant of a death camp. The book is well written and has many good points, but the author has not always been able to depict the fascist as a live person, so that by the end of the book the hero seems to be an evil caricature. It is not tendentiousness but the failure to comprehend historic processes that has tripped Robert Merle up. He hates fascism, but he cannot see its social sources or offer anything in its place.

In the novel *The Dead Stay Young*, by the German Communist, Anna Seghers, the fascists are real people. Each of them has some measure of goodness, and yet they all perpetrate or abet the most frightful crimes. Tendentiousness helped Anna Seghers to look deeper and create a more artistically truthful picture.

Sholokhov was tendentious in *Virgin Soil Upturned*. He knew that this difficult step for the peasantry was a step forward, and this tendentiousness enabled him to penetrate deep into the soul of the *kulaks* and create a picture full of psychological truth, not a flat, poster-like outline of events.

I maintain that there is and has been no true literature other than the tendentious. It is far easier to get rid of crudity in language, weakness in composition, and other literary shortcomings, than of a coldness of the spirit. It is perhaps not out of place to call to mind certain words which are no longer such common currency as they were: vocation, inspiration, service. These words are in fact neither comical nor hollow. They embody a true understanding of the writer's duty; in his own brief life he has to live many lives, to warm people's hearts, consuming himself in the process, and, in bringing light

to man's inner world, help the reader to see more clearly and to live a fuller and greater life.

IT IS said of a writer "he has talent", or, more modestly, "he has ability". If one tries to define more accurately what is meant by these words, one hears "he writes well" or "interestingly", or he has "interesting ideas", or "he is very observant".

There are people who are exceptionally sensitive to words just as there are people exceptionally sensitive to music or to painting. It is difficult to imagine either a poet or a prose-writer indifferent to words, or content with the poor and stereotyped word-stock of the newspapers. A writer's talent is closely linked with his feeling for language, and craftsmanship is achieved only by steady hard work. And yet one may be a good stylist, a skilled craftsman, and fail to move the mind or heart of the reader. Hugo, Baudelaire, Rimbaud are still alive in the consciousness of France. But who can now lose himself in the poetry of the Parnassiens? I have a high opinion of Leskov's talent, but this great writer rarely stirred the reader's heart.

Is it perhaps necessary to add to the ability to write the ability to construct a novel so that it is read with interest? Does a writer's talent perhaps need not only a feeling for words but the presence of imagination? Clearly, a creative beginning, "imagination", to use the everyday word, is as necessary to the writer as to the physicist, the architect, the political leader or any man creating new wealth, whether material or spiritual. The reader is not interested merely in the plot of the novel. Russian nineteenth-century literature (with the exception of Dostoevsky) despised plot. Being an exceptionally truthful literature, it shrank from the improbability of over-dramatic situations, which abound in real life, but in art may appear contrived. Does the absence of a complicated plot make the novels of Turgenev or the stories of Chekhov any the less interesting? It seems that it is not merely a question of developing outward circumstances properly. It is a good thing if the writer has a rich inventiveness and imagination, but this is not enough in itself. There are many well-constructed and interestingly written books, which one reads quickly, "swallowing them whole", and forgets as quickly. The reader skims over them. They have no depth.

Is the most essential thing in the writer's talent, perhaps, his ability to comprehend the course of history? It is of course difficult to conceive of a writer who does not mentally rise above the man in the street. The ability to understand one's own time and look down on it as though from some historic point of vantage has not always been inherent in a writer. Balzac the politician was constantly at variance with Balzac the artist. Tolstoy's depth of penetration into men's minds and hearts did not prevent him from being socially naive. A writer of today can comprehend the development of society more clearly. No longer need he rest content with brilliant premonitions or dubious guesses. He has before him a scientific theory which has stood the test magnificently. The writers in the west who have failed to grasp the significance of the marxist analysis are baffled by the fearful happenings of our age. Their work is either devoted to the enjoyment of trifling personal incidents or it is a wholesale rejection of everything that exists. All the same, comprehension is not enough in itself. There have been first-rate thinkers in the past who wrote poor novels. The people in their books, furnished with names and with outward distinguishing marks and with occupations, are none the less not live people, but diagrammatic truth-carriers or confusion-spreaders.

There remains a final assertion. A writer is strong because he is observant. The word "observant" is defined thus in the dictionary: "Having ability to notice specific things that escape others, details of phenomena and facts." Naturally enough, the writer must be able to note specific details, since

he cannot describe everything and details make it possible for him to depict the hero more clearly, to show his daily life and the conditions he lives in. Who is not delighted by the descriptions of people's external appearance in Tolstoy's novels? These descriptions are made up of keenly observed and skilfully selected details. I do not, however, think that a writer's task is limited to collecting details that escape other people. It would be more correct to say that a writer sees a person's spiritual condition, which determines that person's behaviour, sees what passes unnoticed by those round that person, and is sometimes unknown to the hero himself. This is what makes it possible for a novelist to create character and fill the pages of the novel with real people.

A newsman with a camera must be observant. He wanders about, noting interesting details, characteristic faces, clothes, scenery. Rembrandt was observant in a different sense. His portraits show that he saw not only the colour of his models' hair and skin and their features, but saw into their souls too. This is precisely the kind of observation the artist must have. And in this penetrating sensitiveness to people lies the main characteristic of the writer's gift.



A RECEPTIVE nature, interest in and love for people are characteristic of the writer, but it would be naive to think him capable of understanding any and every man. Everyone, including the writer, perceives the experiences of others through his or her own experience. Feelings alien to the writer and having nothing in common with his spiritual make-up will naturally escape him. Should he nevertheless decide to describe them, he will have to call to mind other people's books and rest content with reasoned deductions. Such books and such pages in books stand out as cold and inexpressive.

Contrary to the view widely held in the West, a writer cannot be a mere spectator at the comedy and drama of humanity. He is bound to participate. The beginning of work on the first chapter of a novel is preceded not only by months or years of preparation—notes, first drafts—but by the author's years of intense life, joy and sorrows, his flights of fancy and his failures, his mutual relationships with other people.

In saying this I do not, of course, mean that a writer shows in a novel or a story only what he has experienced. On the contrary, a writer usually changes not only what he has himself experienced but also what he has observed. Nevertheless, he always describes people whose thoughts and feelings he comprehends. When this is not so there is no literature. And to understand the experiences of his heroes the author must himself undergo experiences which will show him the way to another's heart.

The first world war was described by western writers who had seen it not from their studies but in the dirt and blood of the trenches—Barbusse, Remarque, Renn, Dorgelès, Hemingway, Aldington. The voice of the people spoke out in anger against the fruitless slaughter in these writers' tragic and dramatic works. The second world war, in my opinion, is most clearly portrayed in the work of such Soviet writers as V. Nekrasov, Kazakevich, Bek, Simonov, Grossman and Panova, all of whom took part in the war.

War and Peace is a historical novel, and Leo Tolstoy was describing events which had happened before he was born, after studying material in the archives. While it contains descriptions of distant battles, you will not find in it descriptions of the experiences of officers and men. Tolstoy had taken part in the defence of Sevastopol. Clearly the Crimean War was not like the 1812 Patriotic War, and he could not mechanically transpose his experiences and observations into the pages of the novel, but his participation in the defence of Sevastopol helped Tolstoy to understand the heroes of *War and Peace*.

It is hard for a person who has never been to war to understand what a

combatant experiences, how he overcomes fear, how daily life is organised under the shadow of the nearness of death, how friendship grows and people become both tougher and more sensitive. To describe heroes one must have the key to their hearts, and a writer's observation might be called common experience.

We have often witnessed how, after the appearance of a brilliant and talented first book, the star of some young authors sets prematurely. Either there is no second book, or perhaps there is a second and a third, but they are a disappointment to the reader. Such a tragedy is usually connected with the author's life-story. A young man who has played an active part in life, an engineer or a geologist, a worker or a student, experiences something, sees something. Having talent, he uses his experience in a book, which is useful. He then becomes a professional writer and abandons his former way of life. The stream not only of living observations but of experiences is shut off. The second and third books fail because they are written by guesswork, from literary recollections and rule-of-thumb plans, and not on the basis of experience.

Let us call to mind how tortuous and complicated were the paths of many writers of the past. Let us call to mind Saltykov-Schedrin's civil-service journeyings, Dostoyevsky's forced labour, Gorky's "universities", the banishment of Korolenko, "the shoemaker painter". Each of these writers came to literature with spiritual riches sufficient for dozens of books. Before Dickens wrote *David Copperfield*, *Oliver Twist* or *Little Dorrit* he had lived through a bitter childhood and had known want. As a boy he had worked in a blacking factory. Balzac had worked in a notary's office, had occupied himself with unsuccessful petty commercial ventures and had himself experienced the passions of the French bourgeoisie which he later wrote about.

In the capitalist world it is very difficult to live by literary work alone. Many well-known writers in Western Europe, and even more in America, worked as navvies, sailors, postmen, dockers, street photographers, hairdressers, gold prospectors, before becoming professional writers. They got to know many people and themselves underwent many experiences. This helped them to write novels showing the darker side of capitalist society.

Fedin wrote *Cities and Years* because he had been a prisoner of war in German hands during the first world war. This writer's two latest novels* are closely linked with his own youth. Before Fadeyev wrote *The Rout* he had been a partisan in the Far East. In his stories of the Civil War Vsevelod Ivanov described what he himself had lived through. There is a great deal that is autobiographical in Alexei Tolstoy's trilogy.† The poetic quality of the novel *Lone White Sail*‡ lies in the author's artistic re-creation of his childhood. The opening chapters of *Happiness*§ were not easy for Pavlenko: before writing them he had lived through them.

The particular nature of common experience and, consequently, the choice of heroes, is easy to understand if one thinks of the fate of a published novel. Every reader has his own favourite heroes. Fierce arguments often arise because people evaluate the behaviour of the characters in any given book

* *Early Joys* and *No Ordinary Summer*. Available in English translations through the RTD Book Club at 3/- a volume.

† *The Road to Calvary*. Available shortly in a new translation in a three-volume edition, entitled *Ordeal*. The book traces the fortunes of two middle-class sisters from the eve of the first world war to the early 1920s in Russia.

‡ By Valentin Katayev. The book, which describes life in a river port at the time of the 1905 Revolution in Russia, from a child's point of view, was made into an outstanding Soviet film.

§ Pyotr Pavlenko, for some years a regular soldier in the Red Army, was well known before the war for his books about the Far East. Very badly wounded during the recent war, he wrote a number of film scripts, including that for *The Fall of Berlin*, and some sketches and travel impressions, before he died of war wounds a short time ago.

differently. I have in mind here not the ideological evaluation but the very concept of the hero. When Stendhal's novel *Le Rouge et le Noir* (Scarlet and Black) appeared, some of its readers regarded Julien Sorel as a pure, high-minded romantic, others called him a careerist, a low-principled seeker after fame, a hard-hearted character. We need only recall the discussions round Panova's *Kruzhilikhha* [known as *The Factory* in the English translation.—Ed.] Readers had different views about the character and actions of Listopad [the factory director, who is the central character in the book.—Ed.]. I will permit myself to add that the hero of my novel *The Storm*, Sergei Vlachov, appeared to some readers as worthy of imitation and to others as a weak-willed, selfish character.

Reading is a creative process. In reading a novel, a reader does something akin to the writer's work. He extends what is already in the text by means of his own imagination. In so doing, clearly, he proceeds from his own experiences of life. Different readers visualise the heroes of the same novel differently. This character or that is more colourful or lacks colour: this character or that is raised higher or debased according to the fancy and imagination of the reader. Often, when attending readers' conferences where my novels have been discussed, I have thought involuntarily not only of my many literary blunders but also of the great variety of human character. A reader will find the way to the heart of one hero and pass another by quite unmoved.

Something of the sort happens to writers: they stress one thing and ignore another not because they are forgetful or lazy, but because of their own particular natures and the course of their lives. Every writer has access to the hearts of some people and understands the hearts of others little if at all. Each writer has keys to the heart, some great, some small. But there is not now and never has been a writer who had the keys to all hearts.

We see a writer return over and over again to the same heroes in his work. In speaking of classical literature there are such categories as "Turgenev young women" or "Chekhovian heroes". These types are not only linked with their epoch. Their selection was also determined by the author's particular qualities. Were there no energetic and dominating women in Turgenev's day? Were not people swayed by calculation or by feeling? Was happy love never met with? Turgenev did show energetic and dominating women, he did show happy love, though at a distance; but he drew the heroines who have earned the title of "Turgenev young women" with particular power and outstanding perception. This cannot simply be ascribed to his literary or philosophical interests, his passion for Goethe or Schelling. The images of pure but doomed young women were naturally needed by Turgenev in showing the "superfluous people" and the decay of the gentry. Nevertheless, the more one considers Turgenev's own spiritual experience—he probably met very few of his heroines in real life—the more the character and fate of the "Turgenev young women" resemble his own.

In Chekhov's period there were many stalwart revolutionaries in Russia, people of clear thought and iron will. It was, however, the unsuccessful, the muddle-headed dreamers, the conscientious people crushed by the rottenness and crudity of life, that Chekhov portrayed most willingly. In reading Chekhov's letters and the memoirs of his contemporaries, we see a remarkably gentle and melancholy man who could not bear loud words and avoided dramatic situations, a man who was imbued with compassion for the misfortunes and spiritual weaknesses of those about him. And such he remained in literature. This determined not only his attitude towards his heroes, but their selection. Never did Dostoevsky, from *Poor Folk*, which he wrote in his youth, to *The Brothers Karamazov*, show with any profundity the inner world of women. The characters of his heroines are predestined, and they only appear in order to change the fate of his heroes. In his novels there is no mutual love,

no spiritual agreement. This is connected with his own nature, with his sufferings, his solitude, his whole bitter story.

When a writer, whatever the concepts leading him to do so, describes people he does not know or understand, he inevitably meets with failure. In the last years of his life, Chekhov tried to describe a young woman revolutionary. Veresayev, after reading the manuscript of his story *The Bride*, said to him: "Anton Pavlovich, that isn't how girls become revolutionaries. And girls like your Nadia don't become revolutionaries." Chekhov understood his mistake and went over the story again. He changed not the character of his heroine but the plot. In the published text his Nadia does not "become a revolutionary". Like other Chekhovian heroines, she dreams confusedly of a better life. When Dostoevsky tried to describe the revolutionaries of his day, all he produced was implausible caricature. It was not only that he hated the *milieu* he decided to write about in *The Possessed*. He neither knew nor understood it. In Part Two of *Dead Souls* Gogol wanted to describe people who did not and could not exist: large-hearted serf-owners and noble tax-farmers. What happened to this scheme is well known.

Critical articles often reproachfully reiterate: "Why didn't the author describe such and such a *milieu*, such and such heroes?" Is it conceivable that a writer who has been working on a novel for years did not think of what occurs at once to the reviewer? I believe that the absence of any given themes or heroes from a book results not from some remarkable absent-mindedness on the author's part, nor from over-hasty working, but on account of the limitations I have mentioned.

Contrary to the allegations of defenders of bourgeois individualism, socialist society does not destroy individuality but helps it to flourish. In a country where the cult of "private enterprise" prevails, where capitalist economics have been made an article of religious faith, in the United States in fact, mental stereotyping is becoming more and more marked. We, however, are proud of the fact that Soviet people, while united by common ideals, do not look alike and all have their own particular individual faces. Can a writer be expected to describe anything and everything? What is the point of that? We have plenty of writers, after all, and what one has left undescribed will be tackled by another. Nothing is more depressing than cold, indifferent pages, shoved into a story by a writer lest the critics should say: "Good heavens, he has failed to describe this . . ."



THE WRITER is sometimes asked exactly who it was he described behind the invented name of the hero of a novel. Some readers think that a writer always describes actually existing people that he has chanced to meet. I believe that a writer very rarely uses actually existing people in his novels, and when he does he changes them in writing of them. When I got to know Maresyev, I saw that Polevoi had changed not merely a letter in the hero's surname, but certain aspects of his character.*

Even in historical novels where characters bear the names of people who really existed, the writer endows these characters with traits he has invented according to his conception of their role and actions. A. N. Tolstoy described Peter the Great differently in his novel from his depiction of him in the story *Peter's Day*, which was written long before the novel. The author had changed and it was he who changed the concept of the hero. *The Young Guard* is based on a true story, but the author made many changes.

* Boris Polevoi's book, *The Story of a Real Man*, is the story of the fighter-pilot Meresyeve who, though legless as the result of a crash, learns to fly and to live anew. Polevoi did not actually meet the original of his novel until after it had been published; he built the book up from the legendary tales told of him by his comrades-in-arms at the front. The book is available in English.

The artist does not slavishly copy nature : he transforms it, and creates characters who become real. If one were to take down in shorthand the conversation between two people in love, it would appear both less significant and more artificial than a similar dialogue written by a great writer, who would construct it realistically but omit something here, change something there, and add what the lovers thought but did not say. Colour photography, and paintings reminiscent of photographs, distort man's image, showing merely his outward features or a momentary chance expression. A true artist makes a synthesis and reveals the man. In creating his heroes a writer changes proportions and adapts incidents.

The French painter Matisse once showed me two angry elephants, carved from bone by an inhabitant of Black Africa. I liked one of them very much. Matisse asked me if I saw anything odd about it : I said I did not. Then Matisse showed me that the tusks as well as the trunk were raised, which made him expressive. Matisse laughed : "Some fool turned up and said the tusks could not be raised like that. The negro listened to him and made this one. Look : the tusks are where they should be, but there is no artistry." The second elephant was, indeed, no more than an inexpressive statuette.

Goya showed the horrors of war though ignorant of the facts of anatomy ; and more than 150 years later he shakes us by the profound truth of the portrayal. The war he shows us is infinitely closer to reality than all the canvases of academic battle-scene painters of every time and country.

Any hero in a novel is usually a fusion. Heroes are created after many meetings with many people, and the writer puts his whole life's experience into them. Close friends of the writer are astonished to find in his novels or stories events well known to them quite changed : their own words put into other people's mouths ; the physical appearance of a distant friend given to a man with a completely different life story. It is hard for us to analyse the mental make-up of present-day writers. Even though they live beside us, we do not know their characters or their life stories well enough. But if we want to learn the secret of the birth of the heroes of classic novels, we must get to know the author's letters, his diaries or notebooks, and reminiscences of him by his contemporaries. Then we shall see that the heroes of a novel are seldom born of a meeting with any one person who has particularly struck a writer. Heroes are born when the writer has synthesised many impressions.

A leading legal personality told Tolstoy of an incident which caught the writer's attention. This is said to be how the novel *Resurrection* was born. We know, however, that the problems he raises in this book had disturbed Tolstoy all his life. The story the legal personality told was detailed, which helped the writer to clarify the lines of the subject-matter. The theme of the novel had been born long before this. (Tolstoy in fact altered the lines of the subject matter : the denouement of the novel in no way recalls the incident he had been told about.) It is not simple observation, but rather observation combined with a sharing of experience, which is then synthesised by the artist and makes it possible for him to create characters profoundly alive, expressive of the countenance of society, and typical.

The concept of the typical has nothing to do with statistics. If three million people look like the hero who appears in a novel, the author cannot therefore be said to have succeeded in showing the typical, or to have failed if there are only three thousand such. The writer lives the life of his society and shows what takes place at the very heart of life, not outside it. He shows personalities and people in movement. Chatsky* was not statistically typical, but he

* The young hero of Griboyedov's famous satirical comedy *Woe from Wit*, who attacks the standards of the early nineteenth-century aristocratic society in which he moved and with which he breaks, as his author tried to do. Available in English translation.

expressed the disgust and the confused hopes of advanced circles in Russia. Goncharov created Oblomov* because *Oblomovshchina* was a social calamity, not because Oblomov was an oddity. Anna Karenina's love is exceptional in its intensity, but it is comprehensible to all.

Why are the bourgeois writers of our own day so barren? They withdraw from real life. In their works they portray people who do not remind us of others. Of course, such people do exist. There are even perhaps more of them than one might suppose, but a description of them cannot move the reader who seeks in a novel a reflection of himself and his own times. I do not think that in Stendhal's day such characters as Julien Sorel and Lucien Levaïn were to be met with at any crossroads in France. I believe such characters to be rare. But they represented a concentrate of passions and inclinations significant in their day and existing in a changed form right up to the present. That is why Stendhal continues to be read, and he will probably be read for a long time to come. The heroes of bourgeois novels today are not a synthesis of human passions but peculiar creatures and moral oddities. They seem to ask to be put into a travelling sideshow: the jealous homosexual, the mother in despair because she does not love her child, the man who commits suicide for no sufficient reason. The incidental and the peculiar may astonish a writer, but after turning such occurrences over in his mind he will not describe them, either then or later. Persons or events surprising to him as to others, but lacking human values, will not remain in his memory.

The heroes of a novel are neither a collection of photographs nor a file of questionnaires in the personnel department. They are invented yet real personalities brought into the world by an artist able to apprehend and synthesise life.

A writer peoples the world with the heroes he has created. Were there people like Chatsky in Russia before Griboyedov wrote *Woe from Wit*? Of course there were. But they did not fully know themselves and those about them did not see them clearly. Then people started to say of a man: "He's a Chatsky." Gogol brought a whole troop of characters into the lives of generations. One hears a liar and a boaster called "a Khlestakov" and people described as "Manilovs" to this day. Adolescents and young men fall in love with Lisa and Asya as though they were real girls. The heroine of Gorky's *Mother* seems to us a historic figure. She is no invention to us, but a living woman.

Did there exist a prince called Hamlet in fifth-century Jutland? Or was it an invention of one of the Danish chroniclers? No one cares now. Hamlet's grave is shown in Denmark and tourists look at it and do not doubt that Hamlet existed. In their mind's eye they see the hero created by Shakespeare.

The creation of heroes is the most important and difficult task in a writer's work. It is a complex process, and cannot be approached like engineering production.



IN OBSERVING people, a writer does not see everything. There are thoughts and feelings so intimate, so secret, that they cannot be discovered by even the most experienced observer of human hearts. Such thoughts and feelings occasionally break out at particular moments. They are seen or, more accurately, guessed at by those close to the person concerned. In creating the characters in a novel, a writer bases himself not only on his observations but also on his own experience and personal feelings.

* Goncharov, one of the outstanding Russian writers of the nineteenth century, among a galaxy of genius, created a picture of the "superfluous man", too lazy even to cheat or to work for his own profit or even to marry, which is such a classic characterisation that it has passed into the Russian language as a term of contempt. Available in English translation.

Ibsen's life was profoundly joyless, and all his many plays might be called a protracted monologue. In old age Ibsen admitted: "An artist can create only what he finds a model for in himself, even though only in part and momentarily." This does not, of course, mean that Ibsen did not know Norwegian society or that in his creations he lived solely from himself and his own experiences. There are many and varied characters in his plays, but they all bear the stamp of the author's own character.

For many years French literary historians disputed who had served as prototype for Emma Bovary. All the Rouen police archives were ransacked. If my memory serves me, there were more than ten claimants to the title after the author's death. It may well be that some brief news item had attracted Flaubert's attention, but I cannot imagine him reading some commonplace item and suddenly deciding to write the novel. He probably met many women who attracted his attention, and he gestated the book for a long time. But there is a more interesting fact. In one of his letters to a friend Flaubert wrote that he was working on a novel and explains: "Emma is me." At first glance the statement may seem ludicrous. What is there in common between a morose elderly bachelor, a sceptic, a man of great aesthetic culture, to whose opinions Turgenev listened attentively, and the amorous, light-minded, genteel little provincial? Yet Flaubert did put a great deal of himself into Emma. Proof of this may be found in the correspondence with his friends published after his death. (As far as the genteelness is concerned, Flaubert himself fell a victim to pinchbeck values in literature though not in life. His *Salammbô* accords exactly with the dreams of poor Madame Bovary.)

If this is so, the reader may ask how then the heroes usually described as negative are created. Is it enough in this case for the writer to have a sharp eye? I believe that in the creation of such characters also a writer is helped by his own experience. I have already said that the author need not actually experience everything his heroes experience, but must experience something that will help him to understand the inner world of his characters. A writer need not, of course, actually *be* a hypocrite, an egoist or a coward in order to create characters teeming with such vices. All people, including the writer, educate themselves and are educated by their surroundings. They overcome those feelings or germs of feelings in themselves that they consider base. The writer possesses a powerful inner memory. He remembers how, as a child, as an adolescent, or even as an adult, he overcame those aspects in himself that might have become hypocrisy, cowardice or egoism if left to grow. He particularly hates the stupid traits he sees among those near him or has perhaps observed at some time in himself. Courage is usually a triumph over fear. If there existed a rare nature that had never in any circumstances lived through a single moment of fear, a writer of such a nature could describe a coward's behaviour but not his inner feelings.

A satirist is not afraid to exaggerate. Saltykov-Schedrin wrote *The Golovlev Family* quite differently from *The Story of the Town of Glupov*. Khlestakov makes us laugh or frightens us by his excess of villainy, but in *The Government Inspector* Gogol did not show and could not have shown a single positive hero with ordinary human experiences. In a work where the author tries to portray a black scoundrel side by side with living people who sometimes make mistakes but are spiritually honest, the rogue seems unconvincing to the reader. An artist making a drawing or an engraving can work in black and white. A painter never uses black or white in their pure forms. He mixes other colours with them, because on the canvas, beside a blue sky or against foliage, black looks like a hole, while white shows up as in relief on a flat surface. In depicting society and showing stupid people beside good people, a writer seeks to maintain proportion and bring all the characters to life. To do this he must find the keys to the hearts of all his heroes.

DIFFERENT writers work in different ways on the construction of a novel and the creation of its heroes. The work of some is reminiscent of an architect checking inspiration with a pair of compasses and a slide-rule. Other writers are more like a sculptor gradually turning a lump of clay into a human face. There have been and are writers who work out the plot in every detail before they write the first chapter of a novel. Others see the development of events as they write. A. N. Tolstoy once told me he did not know how the action of his novel would develop in the next chapter, and said he would know how when he had finished the chapter he was then working on. But even when a writer has prepared a most detailed plan for his book, he changes parts of the plan during work on it. There is evidence of this in the rough copies of the classic writers, and many authors of today have confirmed it when I have talked to them of their work. Changes take place largely because the hero of a still unwritten novel, however long the author has been gestating him, is not a live person. He is only a shadow. When the shadow assumes substance and comes to life for the author himself, the latter sees where he went wrong in working out some action or other of his hero's beforehand and planning something he could not think, feel or do. That was precisely why A. N. Tolstoy said he could not see the development of the action in advance. He had to get to know his hero better first.

The characters in a work of the imagination are not to be subjugated to the plot planned by the author. Very often they alter it. They resist the author's intentions. Let me recall Chekhov's tale *The Bride*, which I mentioned earlier. There are many such examples. If the writer forces his heroes to behave out of character, he fails, and the reader immediately feels the artistic falsity of such a book.

To every writer the heroes of his books are real people. They are not chessmen on a board for a player to move. (Even in chess each piece makes its own moves, at that.) I would say that the heroes of a book are to some extent independent of their author. He must take their characters into account and he cannot dictate to them precisely how they must behave. Some critics blame the author for wrong actions on the part of his heroes. In showing living characters who are honest, bold and noble, a writer cannot conceal their weaknesses, mistakes and failures. After all, he is trying to show people, not blue-prints. Do the critics really suppose writers to be nincompoops and political illiterates who do not guess that their heroes are making mistakes? People, society and life correct an individual man's mistakes, and the writer helps the reader to find the right path by showing him the failures. But a writer cannot correct his heroes' lives as a proof reader corrects galley sheets.

The characters in books being living people to the author, he loves them, is glad for them and suffers with them. I do not know whether or not it is a true story that when describing the death of *Le Père Goriot* Balzac felt ill and even wanted to send for the doctor. How can a writer describe the death of a beloved character without feeling it himself? I would dare to assert that a writer suffers the agonies of death many times before death comes to him. Balzac was of an expansive nature and outwardly expressed much that many other writers hide even from those close to them.

When a novel is finished, the writer, after a brief spell of happiness at the completion of his long hard work, lives through a difficult time. He is like one forcibly parted from people he has grown used to living with. As he moves away from the characters even of earlier works he never finally breaks with them. They surround him in an invisible crowd.

Every mother knows what it means to give birth to a man. This was understood and wonderfully described by Leo Tolstoy. I wonder whether our critics all understand it.

THE AUTHOR of even the longest novel cannot show the whole life of his heroes. He selects what he thinks most essential. Sometimes he describes a single day in the hero's life in elaborate detail and then says nothing of the next two years. He may describe in detail the flat where one of the characters lives, but find it unnecessary to describe his wife's appearance. He may draw a portrait of a secondary character, describe an autumn morning or a spring evening, yet say nothing about the age of the man on his way to work that morning or to an appointment that evening.

Many writers deplore the dramatisation or filming of their work and even the illustrating of their books. They did not conceive of their heroes as do the producer, the actor or the artist. An author always knows more about his characters than he tells the reader. He selects such events, details of life, thoughts and feelings as will show the man's character and explain his behaviour. On finishing the book the reader should feel he has come to know the heroes of the story, entered their lives and looked into their hearts. Chekhov's *Dushechka* is a short story, but when you read it you can see the heroine and know her as though she had lived beside you for years.

Soviet literature has produced many heroes known to and loved by the reader—Roshchin and Levinson, Grigori Melekhov and Davydov, Kirill Izvekov and the soldier Ignatiev. This list could be extended. An epic poem would not seem a satisfactory medium for realistic portraiture, but we all know Vasili Tyorkin* and everybody thinks he has met him.

In the unsuccessful novels that upset our Leningrad engineer there are many, sometimes very many, pages, but the reader hardly gets to know anything of the spiritual world of the characters and is unconvinced of their existence. This is not, I think, due to lack of talent in the author, but to a false and unreal portrayal.

It is quite natural for a Soviet writer to try to show the positive aspects of our people, the new deeds and thoughts and feelings that were impossible before the building of a socialist society. But these deeds are being done by living people, these thoughts and feelings mingle with other thoughts and feelings of a workaday character, sometimes with hangovers of former ideas. Our people of today are not dummy models of the ideal man of times to come. They are in actual fact doing an incomparable task in most arduous circumstances, but they all have shortcomings and weaknesses, each of them lives in his own way, loves and is jealous, is hopeful or downcast, happy or sad. By showing the hero in a single dimension, stripping him of everything that might "debase" him, and speaking of nothing but zeal or his achievements on the job, the author makes him unreal.

Sometimes the pasteboard nature of the heroes comes from a determination to impress the reader at all costs. The author forgets that a novel is not a newspaper article and that even the most successful poster cannot take the place of a painting. Sometimes an author is depicting a bit of real life, but, fearing that this bit of life will seem terribly ordinary, he superimposes on it a phantom figure, an ideal hero brimming over with every good quality. There are also cases where an author's knowledge and understanding of the person he is trying to picture are inadequate. He confines himself to describing production successes, since it is easier to understand how a machine works than how a heart beats.

When you read the novels of today's writers in bourgeois France you see the authors destroying their heroes. They show them in a single dimension. As an example I will take a love story, chosen by a given writer because he

* The hero of a long epic poem of that name, by A. Tvardovsky. Tyorkin is the embodiment of all that is fine in a Red Army man, honest, brave, cheerful, popular, a good story-teller. The book has had, and continues to have, enormous sales in the Soviet Union. There is unfortunately no English translation.

likes this kind of psychological analysis. Such a novel will have a hero, a heroine and another man. The author will tell you in detail what the heroine felt when she first met the other man, and how the hero reacted. The heroine will go off with the other man, then she will return to the hero, then she will again want to meet the other man. The other man will happen to get to know the hero, and the author will explain what each of them feels on this occasion. In a later chapter the heroine will have a dream and spend a whole day wondering whether it is worth while telling the hero about it. Then the author will show us the other man coming across the heroine's glove in a drawer of his writing-desk. He will feel passion, remorse, malice and inexplicable unhappiness all at the same time. Enough. Having got as far as the glove, any reader will feel a thoroughly explicable unhappiness. He will put down the book half-read, but not because it deals with unhappy love. The conflict of hearts is an evergreen theme and we cannot regard jealousy as an inexplicable feeling. It is not in the elaborately detailed analysis of the experiences of the three characters that the fault lies, either. The French speak of "cutting a hair in four" to denote such a mental exercise. The trouble is that the author has split a hair from a non-existent head, for the reader is not convinced of the existence of hero, heroine or other man. The author has said nothing of their backgrounds. He describes the flat the other man lives in minutely, with the writing-desk and the glove, but finds it unnecessary to say what his job is and what he does when he is not mooning over the glove. What is he? A fashionable doctor, a Stock Exchange broker, a Member of Parliament? The author mentions in passing that the hero is a journalist. But we do not know where he works or what he writes about. Is he a news reporter describing the body of an old lady slashed to death by a nephew, or does he write up the big-heartedness of America? What is the parents' attitude to the heroine's behaviour? According to the author, they are addicted to moth-balls, double locks and virtue. Characters torn not only from society but from their own lives, and exclusively preoccupied with amorous experiences, seem unreal. They are three waxworks. The reader is not in the least sorry for any of them. They just bore him.

In an unsuccessful Soviet novel, one of those I have mentioned (unpublished, by some oversight), the author at once tells you what the jobs of the hero and the heroine are (it goes without saying that there is no other man): they both work in a steel smelting plant. The heroine is bold and represents the spirit of innovation. The hero is a decent chap, but suffers from a hide-bound attitude. The heroine thinks of a new production process which will make for six per cent economies. The hero does not have faith. The author describes a production meeting in detail—good-hearted old craftsman welcoming the heroine's initiative, sceptical engineer doubting the wisdom of the new method, commission sent from the centre, conference at the regional committee, and ultimate complete victory of the advanced idea. The hero, stirred to the depths by these happenings, congratulates the heroine. The author shows the heroine, all blushes, answering the hero: "Grisha, now we must turn to and do an even better job . . ." In the next chapter we first of all learn that the hero and heroine have over-fulfilled the norm, and secondly that they have produced a son. They turn out to have been in love with each other, and once their differences on the new proposals put forward by the heroine were at an end, they had got married.

Labour is a great and responsible theme. What is more, it is a new theme. In capitalist society labour is regarded as a curse, and the dreamers of the past went no farther than to hope working hours might be cut. A novel about our life in which the heroes are idle or regard work as an uninteresting detail in their lives is inconceivable. The mistake of the author of the novel I am talking about was not, therefore, showing the factory, new methods, arguments. All this needed describing. But the author forcibly parted the heroes from their

private lives. We learn of the love between the hero and the heroine in passing, and the cry of a new-born child in one of the chapters actually comes as rather a surprise to the reader. The author thought he was exalting his heroes, but he was debasing them. He denied them any depth or complexity of feeling or any fullness of spiritual development. Some such novels are published and re-published. There are plays in which the actors have to play pigmy people making up their minds about coal or steel or cotton prints. When such plays are put on, the theatre-goers, even if they are sitting in the stalls, see them from above. The characters seem crude to the audience.

Our best writers have in the thirty-five years of the Soviet state's existence created a lot of living heroes, fighters for a new society and the building of it. Then why have we got this abundance of novels and of stories long and short showing our people of today as spiritually stunted? Some of the blame seems to me to rest on certain (alas, too many) critics, reviewers and editors, who still persist in believing that to simplify a hero's image is to exalt him and that to deepen and broaden the subject-matter is to debase it.

For years and years our journals have published no love poetry. Young men and women have grown up, fallen in love, suffered, found happiness, but poetry has not reflected or expressed this. I shall perhaps be told that the heroic nature of national reconstruction permits of no other themes. Yet Mayakovsky wrote his poem *About This* at no commonplace time. He showed how the theme of love could be exalted in conjunction with dreams for the future. It is worth noting that while our publishing houses and journals were shunning the lyrical our radio quite often broadcast love songs, musical settings not only of Pushkin and Lermontov, but of A. K. Tolstoy, Fet and even Rathaus. Why should our lovers have had to find an expression of their feelings in the verse of Rathaus and not in that of writers of today? The questions could be multiplied. Why do stories so rarely offer any mention of lovers' or family quarrels, or any mention of illness, or of the death of near and dear ones, or even of bad weather? (The action usually takes place on a "fine summer's day" or a "perfumed May night" or a "clear, crisp, autumn morning".) Certain critics cling to the naive view that our philosophy of optimism and the picturing of our people's great deeds are incompatible with any description of unrequited love or the loss of someone near and dear.

An arduous but noble task has fallen to us—the portrayal of people in a new society, the showing not of blue-prints but of real people, people living rich, full, complex lives.

IN SPEAKING of a writer's work I often quote the writers of the past. What have we to learn from them? Purity and richness of language, composition, the external forms, is what we are usually told.

True, one can learn all this from the classics. One cannot and must not write in the poverty-stricken language of the newspapers. Let us recall Tolstoy's ability to show man, Turgenev's to introduce scenery as part of the novel, Chekhov's expressive terseness, the unparalleled rhythm of lyrical cadences in Gogol, the combination of poetic feeling and profound clarity in Lermontov's prose, and much else.

Learning does not mean imitating. I believe that new content has always created new forms. The novel of the nineteenth century was overwhelmingly a personal or a family story and the author grouped his characters round one or more heroes. Today social life enters more into a man's personal life. A novel, even a psychological one, is inconceivable without some portrayal of numbers of people met by the hero or heroes. This is bound to be reflected in the composition of the novel. The rhythm of life, too, has altered. I find it hard to imagine a novel of today whose action is constantly being held up by extensive descriptions of scenery. To Turgenev it was organic. Today it would appear

highfalutin. But there is something else we might learn from the classical writers : their approach to the portrayal of people.

It may be objected that this is impossible, since today everything is different.

Yes. The Soviet writer differs from nineteenth-century writers. He has a different view of the world. There is much that he perceives differently. The people he draws differ from the heroes of classical literature, too. They do not reason like Rudin or Levin. They do not work like Chekhov's Trofimov. They do not love like the heroines of Chekhov's *Three Sisters*. The great writers of the nineteenth century did not confine themselves to descriptions of what they saw. They tried to raise the curtain of the years and look into the future. They lacked, however, the scientific theory of social development that today has become the heritage of any writer who is just beginning. They had to guess, and they were often wrong. We find their philosophical and social ideals naive, limited and sometimes mistaken. Soviet writers can pick out the trend in the development of human relationships. They know which feelings will develop and which are destined to die away.

If I so often recall our great predecessors in speaking of a writer's work, I do so because they drew their contemporaries with such remarkable insight. From them we can learn artistic truthfulness, profundity in the understanding of man, the ability to portray man's life.

In bourgeois society there did and does exist a cleavage, a gulf between reality and art. When a bourgeois young man wants to marry a poor girl, or to take up art instead of commerce, or to do something decent but unprofitable, he is told : "Life is not a novel." Who protested at the immorality of Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* ? The very bourgeois men who frequented brothels and thought it good form to keep a mistress. In Italy recently, who demanded the removal of a Botticelli painting on the grounds that it was corrupting youth ? Corrupt old men who are subscribers to every pornographic publication. Who in America was angered by Chaplin's films, saying that they were immoral ? Large-scale robbers, gangsters, protected by their leading positions, people who earn millions in every kind of dirty business. The morality of a bourgeois is double-faced. He wishes those who work to keep the Ten Commandments and also the Eleventh, brought into the world by the bourgeoisie : *Thou Shalt Honour Money*. He himself lives by the Eleventh alone. He stands, after all, above vulgar morality. He may steal, lie, corrupt and kill.

In socialist society two-faced morality is generally condemned. Of course we have thieves who prate of honesty, stupid people who make a show of self-criticism, slanderers who protest their worship of truth. But these are exceptions, and society fights them. Two-faced morality is not necessary to any single stratum of the population or to any decent individual. No one is interested in an art that deceives people.

Our people consider that life is a novel and novels are life. And when the Soviet reader blames the writers for their heroes not being real live people, we must needs pause and consider.

The letter from my Leningrad inquirer was not the first. Readers often write (and I know that other writers get letters too) of their desire to see in literature a profound and truthful picture of our reality. Readers would like our writers to describe ordinary people in a fuller, more lively, more heartfelt manner, to show people who are by no means ordinary, to show the difficulties besetting a man's spiritual growth, the conflicts between forward movement and the burden of the past. Readers want writers to show that the everyday is heroic and that heroism is an everyday occurrence, to convey the passion of our day without the sort of feeling that is not really characteristic of our people. They want them to show the spiritual qualities of Soviet people without embarrassing hyperbole, to distinguish between genuine greatness of

stature and walking on stilts, and not to substitute the disease of verbosity for the beating of the heart.

Some critics think that all our writers should portray ideal people. We know that Soviet man does stand higher, is spiritually richer and more complex than the heroes of the bourgeois novel of today, heroes who are outwardly fine but inwardly inhuman, part mystics, part speculators, part Hamlets, part cheats. If we showed our reality quite plain and unadorned, there would be books about remarkable people. The ordinary Soviet man has good qualities and bad. The society that appeared an unattainable ideal to the great minds of the past is being built not by ideal blue-prints but by real ordinary people.

In the novels the Leningrad engineer wrote about, the heroes have no shortcomings. They are spiritually well groomed and well combed, each of them has got his part off pat, and should he forget it the author will prompt him in time with suitable words. Everything about such heroes is fine. There is only one thing wrong—the reader does not believe in their existence.

Nowadays they keep telling us to draw negative characters. This is said by the same critics who want positive heroes to be ideal concepts. Imagine a writer showing a wonderful person without any weaknesses or shortcomings, and living side by side with him a lazy man or a swindler endowed with real human qualities. Will not the stupid man shown in the round as a three-dimensional figure overshadow the one-dimensional ideal hero, a man with his face bathed in light but whose body casts no shadow? Goncharov tried to make Shtolts a perfect figure, but he appears unreal side by side with the living Oblomov. I venture to add that in some of my novels, written a quarter of a century ago, I was unsuccessful. The negative heroes in them were more real and tangible than the positive heroes whom I endowed with every good quality and virtue. Similar misfortunes have befallen other authors of today.

Soviet readers love our literature passionately, are upset by its failures and cheered by its successes. They look at the great and complex life of our society and in some novels they find untruths, over-simplifications, convention. They want to see their comrades, their contemporaries and themselves in books as living people, not as examples of spiritual perfection. Reading and re-reading the classics, they know how honestly, skilfully and profoundly Tolstoy, Chekhov and Gorky portrayed the people of pre-revolutionary Russia, and they, the ordinary readers, always high-minded, keep on knocking at the doors of the Soviet novel.



I KNOW that there are fine books full of romanticism, and I am not confusing them with the hackneyed, frigidly virtuous and indigestible works I have mentioned. (Needless to say I am not referring to the Romantic Movement of the first half of the nineteenth century, but to what is currently called romanticism—an exaltation of the spirit.)

There is an age when romanticism is as necessary to the spirit of man as phosphorus to his body. It is no accident that young people are drawn to Lermontov until Pushkin's great profundity opens up to them. It is no accident that one of the favourite books of one of the girls belonging to the Young Guard was *The Demon* [a poem by Lermontov]. It is no accident that *Ovod* [*The Gadfly*, by E. Voynich] is read and re-read by young people. It is no accident that it is the works of N. Ostrovsky rather than those of other famed craftsmen of the word that have helped many a young spirit both in our country and far beyond our borders to find itself.

Romantic works do not attract the attention of young people only. The aesthetes buried Hugo long ago. They buried him for his lush language, his improbable situations, for his exaggerated overloading. But when his centenary came round a year ago he turned out to be known and read everywhere to this day.

In classic Russian literature one may mention *Taras Bulba*, *The Portrait*, *Asya*, or Gorky's early stories. Today readers of different ages like the books of Kaverin, Paustovsky, Kazakevich. I know old people who cried over *The Young Guard*.

A romantic approach to a subject permits the writer to show a hero in whom bright and shining aspects of man are concentrated. The author spotlights the traits of the hero he has selected, so that all the proportions stand out with exceptional sharpness. We believe in the real existence of the characters in romantic books because, in creating them, the author is not didactic but poetic, because he does not preach but exults in distance and height.

French schoolchildren are tortured year after year in their final examinations by the following theme: "Compare Racine, who showed people as they were, with Corneille, who showed people as they should be."

One schoolboy wrote: "Racine is closer to us than Corneille because he showed people filled with passions and did so truthfully." Another, succumbing to temptation, wrote: "Corneille is undoubtedly greater than Racine because he showed people as they should be, virtuous and brave, inspired by elevated feelings and conquering in themselves every baser appetite."

We see that differences in the methods used to depict heroes existed long before the stormy declarations of the romantic poets, before the realists, the naturalists, the surrealists and the neo-realists.

Quarrels over drama and reality in art continue to this day in the West. They cannot but disquiet us and our readers. Socialist realism is not a literary school. It permits of a great variety of artistic methods. I like the Antonov story *The Rains*, written with an honesty and gentleness Chekhov would have approved. This does not prevent me from loving the romantic work *The Star*, by Kazakevich. The heroes of *Two Captains* and of *Harvest* are differently drawn. Sometimes the same writer at different periods of his life uses different artistic methods. Fadeyev tried to show the heroes of *The Rout* as modestly and truthfully as possible, while the heroes of *The Young Guard* are bathed in the light of romanticism. And both these books are successful.

Racine created the amorous and sinful *Phèdre*. She lives in a different world from that of Corneille's stiff-necked *Horace*. The romantics of the nineteenth century drew their readers on to the mountain heights. The naturalists tried to cast their readers down into the depths of life in the underworld. The "noble" policeman in *Les Misérables* and the good Doctor Bovary could not exist in the same world, although the two novels in question were written at almost the same time. Hugo saw a man who had never existed, while Flaubert would not see in his hero all that there was.

In the *Stalingrad Trenches* and *The Star* are two works unlike one another. How do they differ? Not in their subject-matter. The battle of Stalingrad called for as much heroism as did scouting in the enemy's rear. Nor do they differ in their spiritual scope. I can see the heroes of *The Star* and Nekrasov's sappers in the same dug-out. They understand one another very well. They were living the same sort of life at the time. The writers have described them differently. This is not a division into two worlds. It is simply the manifold variety of art.

I remember certain critics condemning the romantic approach to portraying heroes. Now they are demanding, on the contrary, that writers should show ideal people. In so saying, moreover, the critics assert that only virtuous heroes can serve as an example to the reader. Is this true? Readers react differently to works of the imagination. A good deal depends on their age and their spiritual growth. Some readers really do try to imitate ideal heroes. To others, such heroes appear distant and unattainable. They learn from the example of people who are not without weaknesses, from their mistakes and

from their successes. They do not want to know how to be born a hero, but how to become one.

Let us leave the argument between young French pupils and pedantic old critics. We know we must show real people. For this we need truthfulness, passion, humanity. These qualities are equally needed by realist and by romantic. It is not one artistic method that they distinguish from another, but literature from potboilers and trash.

ONE OF our critics wrote: "The identity of the ideal with reality, with socialism—which has done away with the actual causes of imperfections and deformities in human nature—is the very soil from which springs the positive hero of Soviet literature." If this critic was right and the reality of 1948 (his article was written five years ago) was the ideal, it is impossible to understand why our people have been and still are striving to improve our society still further, why we speak of the transition from socialism to communism as gradual. I fear that some critics, who hand out political lessons to writers with a liberal hand, have not altogether assimilated the principles of Marxism themselves.

Can one assert that in socialist society we have done away with "the causes of imperfections and deformities in human nature"? Socialist society is a society in transition—behind it lies capitalism, ahead communism.

The October Revolution opened up a new age where the creed of money was replaced by the creed of creative labour. Many vices—greed, avarice, laziness—were in the past not merely tolerated but often honoured. Today they are despised. They corrupt the human spirit less often, but they have not yet disappeared. There exist other moral sores. You need only study the press for a month to find articles and satirical sketches attacking officiousness, malingering, toadyism, red-tapism, abuse of authority, self-seeking, and other "imperfections and deformities".

Many are the critics, publishers' readers and chiefs of editorial boards who consider it is not for the writer to describe some of the imperfections that are still with us. These critics and editors are even more down on any representation of the moral conflicts that often cramp and darken the lives of fine people in the Soviet Union.

This is where the question of the writer's social role arises, his duty and his mission, which is to serve the people.

The great writers of the nineteenth century took their heroes' sufferings to heart. The novels of Hugo, Dickens, Balzac, Stendhal, Flaubert denounced a world of profit and lies. With even greater profundity and humanity, the Russian writers of last century described how the powerful, the rich and the idle were crushing the weak, the poor and the toiling.

In the main, the great novelists of the past rarely participated directly in the struggle for the destruction of the social regime that disfigured and killed their heroes.

And some of them, like Balzac and Gogol, were contradictory, defending in life what they condemned in their writings.

Every Soviet writer does participate in the work to which our entire nation is devoted—the building of a communist society. It is not a question of our writers having some kind of social activity outside their literary work. We consider our work as writers as the most responsible of social tasks; we know that books can change men and life.

Imaginative literature educates the reader, helps him to live better, refines his feelings, makes man pay more attention to those near and dear to him, to his friends, to all men. Novels, stories and poems are the emotional cement of society.

There is another side to our work. The writer must show conflicts and

inner contradictions, he must record every symptom of moral sickness, he must show clearly the struggle between light and shadow waged in the human heart.

If an agronomist sees that a cultivation method has proved unsatisfactory, he says so. If an engineer notices unsatisfactory production results, he does not conceal the fact. It is a writer's duty to depict not only conflicts that have already been brought into the open and for which there is a solution, but to show moral difficulties that neither books nor the press have yet mentioned. If a writer can see man's inner world more clearly and completely than his reader, how can he fail to show phenomena not yet evident to all? The writer's place is not in the staff car; he is more of a scout than a headquarters secretary. He does not copy, he does not expound, he discovers.

Since Makarenko's books* much has changed in our schools; *Virgin Soil Upturned*† helped in the introduction of the new life in the countryside; *Front*‡ helped our army.

Is the private life of our readers free from contradictions? Are there no vestiges of the past among our contemporaries against which we must fight? Are conflicts between man's magnificent social activity and the imperfections of his private life so rare? There are plenty of subjects seeking authors.

When they showed the moral decay of their heroes the great novelists of the nineteenth century could see no way out. Many of them understood the social causes leading to human dramas, but were unable to believe in the possibility of improving society. They sometimes tried to justify their impotence by religious or philosophic concepts. *Anna Karenina* has as its motto the cruel formulation "Vengeance is Mine". Zola used as his motto for *Thérèse Raquin* Taine's aphorism which states that vice and virtue are products like vitriol and sugar.

To a Soviet writer vice is not original sin and suffering is not an inevitable doom. We live in a rational and vital society. Writers of every age have dreamt of defending man. For us the dream has become reality. Our land is governed by men chosen by the people, who respect the people. Never before in history have writers had so many opportunities, and we must justify the mission the people have entrusted to us.



IT WAS after long hesitation that I decided to publish these comments on the writer's work. There are obviously many debatable points. I said in my opening remarks that I wanted to share my personal experience with readers.

If I had doubts, it was not because these comments bear the mark of their author's hand. Novels also are marked with the writer's likes and dislikes. But I wondered whether the moment to raise questions relating to the writer's work had yet come. I think it has.

Since the war I have visited many countries in Western Europe and in America, and have met many writers. Everywhere I have heard bitter judgments: "This age is not for literature." Writers have talked to me about the profound *malaise* of men who do not know today what will happen to them tomorrow. Rumours of another war, tremendous social upheavals, the daily increasing difficulties of life are preventing man from reflecting over a book, and often from so much as picking one up. Writers of many western countries have told me that everything has gone down—the level of literary work, the

* Anton Makarenko (1888-1939), educationist and writer, author of many books and articles, famous for *The Road to Life*; *Learning to Live*; *Advice to Parents*. The first is now available in English; the others will become available in 1954.

† By Mikhail Sholokhov. The story of collectivisation in Southern Russia. Available in English.

‡ By Alexander Korneichuk, leading Ukrainian playwright; written in 1942, at a difficult period of the war. He very sharply criticises leading Red Army generals. It has been widely performed.

size of editions, the readers' interest in literature. Over and over again they said : "The military men and the diplomats and politicians are lucky ; they know what they have to do. But writers are no use to anyone. This age is not for literature."

I think that in our country the age of a great literature is now dawning.

The reader perhaps will be surprised ; have not our writers had excellent conditions up to now ? Have they not written remarkable books ? Are not novels published by the million in our country, and have not scores or even hundreds of Soviet novels been translated into many languages ?

All this is so. One cannot compare the conditions of Soviet writers to the difficult and at times dangerous life of any honest writer in the West. One cannot compare the editions of our novels to those of literary editions in any bourgeois country. One cannot compare the interest in our literature shown by readers, wherever they live, to the interest in current literature in France or Britain.

Why then do I say that the age of a great literature is now dawning in our country ?

Our best writers have obviously written excellent books. Compare them with bourgeois novels of today and see which society inspires the artist and which mutilates him.

Great writers never appear in a desert ; there have to be the decent middle-grade writers. We have such writers too, and their good books are, if truth were told, better than many much-vaunted novelties in the West. But I do not see why we should compare our books with the death-rattle of a dying world.

At every period in the life of our State, critics have talked of the expansion of our literature. All the same, in building a house one does not begin with the roof but with the foundations. To take an example from our economy, it will be recalled that the creation of heavy industry was the precondition for the ultimate expansion of light industry. The first ditches had long been dug in Kuznetsk and Magnitogorsk before the question of a possible abundance of consumer goods was raised.

In thirty-five years Soviet literature has done a great deal. It has helped readers to understand what is the essence of our society. We have described events and exploits and the extraordinary work done by our people. We have shown them at work, and on the field of battle when the fascists invaded our country. Our literature has built and fought.

The books of Soviet writers, translated into almost every language in the world, have brought readers the good news—a new world is born !

These books, very varied in their artistic merits, have shown all the qualities of our society, and each period in our turbulent history remains linked, in the minds of our foreign friends, to novels by Soviet authors ; the beginning of industrialisation, Gladkov's *Cement* ; collectivisation, Sholokhov's *Virgin Soil Uplifted* ; the war years, Bek's *The Volokolamsk Highway*, Simonov's *Days and Nights*, Grossman's *The People Immortal* ; and the rehabilitation of our country, Pavlenko's *Happiness* and Nikolayeva's *Harvest*. This list is obviously very incomplete. I merely wished to stress the role played by our books abroad.

I have said that it was much more difficult for us than for the writers of the nineteenth century to understand and firmly grasp the essential nature of our contemporaries : our society was going through its birth-pangs. The war was an ordeal by fire. The people emerged spiritually strengthened and tempered ; when our enemies rattle their sabres, our people remain calm : they know their own power. Human sorrow sometimes darkens a mother's face as she bends over page 4* of our newspapers. The Soviet woman has suffered

* Most Soviet newspapers have four pages, the back page being devoted to foreign news.

much. But she knows our people to be invincible, and, banishing sorrow, she smiles at her new-born infant. Never before has our society been so strong.

Man's new features have been drawn and they are more expressive. The new house has been furnished. New men are plain to be seen. Writers of my generation worked in a difficult epoch for literature. Today it is easier for men of letters to reflect Soviet society and Soviet men, as they are, truthfully and profoundly.

The enemies of justice and humanism have hated the Soviet state from the day of its birth. They feared lest it should become stronger and set a dangerous example to the working people of the whole world. They feared what the development of Socialist society would mean. Now they fear not our future but our present; they see how much our life has changed, and today they fear statistics more than any arguments or slogans.

Soviet literature is coming of age. It has above all been strong in the work it has depicted. It must become strong in depicting the men who do that work.

Never in the whole of history have there been readers like ours.

You need only participate in a readers' conference, spend an evening in a factory library, run through the letters writers receive, to see the profundity, the feeling and the ardour our readers have. And who are they?

They are not small circles of connoisseurs, or the narrow strata of pre-revolutionary intellectuals; no, our readers are the people. We must compare our work not to the *coterie* novels and detective stories of the West, but to our readers; and everyone will say the people are finer than the books show.

I look towards tomorrow with hope. My Leningrad correspondent, and tens of thousands of readers, will read more remarkable books. They cannot be ordered or provided for in a plan. But the high status, the steadfastness and the spiritual power of our society proclaim that the age of a great literature, as great as our people, has come.

*Translated by E. FOX.
From ZNAMYA, 10, 1953.*

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ORIGINALITY AND INSPIRATION IN MUSIC

Aram Khachaturian

NEVER in all history has life been so stirringly beautiful, so teeming with interest or so full of events of world-wide significance as in this age of communist construction. Never before has the artist been provided with such attractive subjects or had such a vast public to read, watch or listen to his work. But we Soviet composers—can we say that our work is meeting the growing cultural demands of Soviet audiences or that our achievements are worthy of our aims? No. To be honest, we must admit that the works we have been producing in recent years have fallen far short of the high standards the people expect of us.

Take the opera, the symphony, the cantata, popular songs, musical comedy or light music—whatever the indisputable merits of individual works in these genres, they still fail to meet the constantly growing demands of the people as a whole. This great and growing demand is an integral part of the great basic law of socialism. Certain figures in the musical world fail to understand it, however, and adopt a thoughtless, opportunist approach to it. Do we not, in all conscience, produce enough works in which the composer abandons his own individuality in favour of drab, outworn musical verbiage? Why does he do it? Because he believes the public will accept only the familiar and commonplace. This is analogous to the attitude which would palm off on people some cast-off article acquired from a second-hand stall that buys up all the old things the populace wants to get rid of. “It’s come from the populace”, they say, “so let’s pass it back to them.”

But the people won’t accept second-hand goods. They call on us to give them freshly inspired works of art, that have grace and beauty.

How often have we witnessed such opportunism, particularly in the last few years! How often have we listened to “monumental” works, performed on a lavish scale, that amounted to nothing but empty prattle by the composer, bolstered up with a contemporary theme announced in descriptive titles!

How many times have we condoned obvious mistakes in a work simply because of its label announcing a grand, moving, patriotic theme, the struggle for peace, or the friendship of the peoples! And with all this how little we have delved into the essence of the work, how unexacting we have been towards the means by which the composer has attempted to express his fine idea, never considering whether these “rule of thumb” methods suited his great artistic purpose.

Time and the very requirements of our musical life have provided a conclusive judgment on such works: they have been forgotten for good.

In dealing with this question of deliberate or unwitting opportunism, I would like to touch on a problem over which I am deeply concerned, that of creative innovation.

The whole history of art affirms the immutable truth that only those works of art which give profound and striking embodiment to the realities of life, in which can be felt the pulse of some vital, impassioned idea, leave their mark on men’s minds.

What power of urgent conviction, what dauntless verve there is in the approach of the great classical composers to the solution of the artistic problems life set them. Bach, Beethoven, Glinka, Mussorgsky and Chaikovsky were innovators in art. Myaskovsky was a daring innovator. The strength of

these and many other innovators lay in their blazing a new trail in art, serving the people, meeting the requirements of living reality, and obeying the call of profound inspiration.

It seems to me that some people in the musical world do not properly understand this problem of innovation, which is so important to the development of progressive art. They associate innovation with the chasing after "novelty for novelty's sake" typical of work by formalist foreign composers. Novelty-hunting of this kind is profoundly alien to us, and we shall continue to fight with unflagging energy against formalist experimentation.

Innovation is not an end in itself. We well remember Comrade Zhdanov's words : " The new must be an advance on the old, otherwise there is no point in it." We must never forget how many mistakes were made in Soviet music when formalist " innovation " was the vogue.

We must aim at realist innovation founded on the traditions of classical art.

Innovation, for the realist, is not purely a technical matter, limited to a search for refined and pretentious harmonies and unprecedented polyphonic chords. I set great store by technically perfected and inventive works. But the technique and the form must be wholly subject to the *idea* behind the work—to its *emotional content*. No matter what the technical subtleties, they are not worth a brass farthing if they do not help convey to the listener the composer's concept as an element of the artistic content of the work—that concept itself is vitiated. The technique must not be divorced from living music which must have its spiritual effect on the listener, must rouse his emotions and delight him.

There is a false but still current " theory " that it is not the " what " but the " how " that is important in art. Those who subscribe to this theory are interested in the technique of the composition and not in the content and the idea behind it. They forget that although a composer may possess the last word in skill, it will be meaningless and useless if the content of his work is trivial. Works stuffed with pompous rhetoric but devoid of all depth and life leave us cold. True, there are " connoisseurs " capable of going into ecstasies over such flummery. " But actually the Emperor had no clothes on at all . . . "

Technique is a good thing when the artist has something to say, when he has something to tell his audience, when he is the inspired, unsullied voice of his people and of his times and is able to give faithful and vivid expression to them.

Whenever I reflect on the ways in which Soviet music has progressed, my mind involuntarily turns to the works of those remarkable composers, Sergei Prokofiev and Dmitri Shostakovich. Their best works move me, arouse creative ideas in me, and leave my mind in a restless state.

The spirit of the age, we know, is reflected in music as in any other form of art. Those of Shostakovich's and Prokofiev's works that are significant in conception embody with great artistic power the themes and images of our times, so crammed with revolutionary vitality. I am not just thinking of the subject matter of one or two of their works, nor of their descriptive reflection of stirring pages in our history, of events and facts of our era, but of their feeling for the pulse of contemporary life, how they are attuned to the Soviet individual's spiritual world. I have no wish to impose my own feelings on anybody else. I know there will be people who will disagree with me, but that is how I respond to Prokofiev and Shostakovich. I can hear the pulse of our revolutionary life beating even in such works as *Alexander Nevsky*, whose theme goes back to Russia's distant past, and in Shostakovich's deeply lyrical Fifth Symphony.

Not long ago Soviet music suffered a heavy loss : Sergei Prokofiev died—an inspired Soviet composer, an artist and an innovator in the very highest

sense of the term. More than once in his musical career Prokofiev made mistakes, and he was carried away at times by the search for novelty of form in itself. The Soviet public rightly criticised him for this. And, like a true Soviet artist, Prokofiev took up the right attitude to that criticism and was able to give a sensitive response to the people's requirements and to correct his mistakes. He wrote a number of splendid realist works and must indeed be placed in the ranks of the most important and greatest Russian composers, of whose creative heritage the whole Soviet people is justly proud.

In his best works of art, Prokofiev stands out as a realist, a champion of progressive ideas and national character in music. In such outstanding works as *Alexander Nevsky*, *Zdravitsa*, *On Guard for Peace*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Cinderella*, the Seventh Symphony, and in some of his sonatas and concertos, he subordinates innovation to the great purpose of democratic art in our time.

To serve his people and progressive mankind was the guiding principle for Prokofiev as a national composer, and his best works were written in the last two decades of his life. He was a great artist and a bold champion of progressive art.

There are many of us who are sadly lacking in his creative daring and fiery energy, and I should like to call on our composers and our young composers to be bold in their work.

A sense of what is new is one of the most precious attributes of the Soviet artist. And it is by no means bound to show itself only in compositions on the grand scale. Examples of true innovation are to be found in Soviet songs, or in devising a new manner of execution. Our sensitive audiences are always strong supporters of anything in music that contains the precious seeds of a fresh form of expression.

I am convinced that the germ of artistic progress is not to be found in works devoid of life, searching thought, works that are outwardly smooth, groomed and polished till they are indistinguishable from each other. Socialist realism will not tolerate uniformity of this kind: it presupposes freedom of development for a great variety of vivid creative individualities. Mayakovsky's splendid call for "more good poets and a greater variety of them" is perfectly applicable to Soviet music too.

In dealing with contemporary music, we must not forget about revolutionary romanticism, one of the important elements of socialist realist style. A work imbued with revolutionary romantic passion and inspired with fervent patriotism and a feeling for socialist man is inconceivable without some creative impulse, or if the composer is always glancing over his shoulder hoping nothing will go wrong. Have we not plenty of works that appear on the surface to be quite all right—their intention is perfectly good and their themes are national in character, the harmonies are pleasing and the orchestration is intelligent—but whose artistic significance is practically nil, since they show not the slightest originality or inspiration? Works of this kind often enough receive favourable criticism at the Composers' Union, at the Central Arts Council, or on the air. But audiences remain unmoved, since the idea behind the work is superficially expressed and the music, which is solely "narrative and informative" leaves not the slightest impression on the memory of even the most well-disposed theatre-goer. And we Soviet composers, it must be said, have the most favourably disposed audiences in the world. Therein lies our good fortune. But it puts us under a great obligation.

It seems to me it is time the established system of institutional tutelage under which composers work was revised. I would go even farther: we must once and for all reject interference in musical composition, as it is practised by musical bodies, as worthless.

Problems of composition cannot be solved by official bureaucratic methods. It is the duty of the artist to find the true solution to his musical problems in

the light of the vital tasks the Party has set us. In fact, that is his job as a Soviet artist.

The place of sensible planning and understanding guidance of the country's musical activities must not be usurped by interference in the actual process of composition or interpretation, by imposing on composers the tastes of musical institute officials—officials who take no part in creative work but imagine themselves as standing “above” it. Soviet composers must become imbued with a high sense of civic responsibility. If greater confidence is shown in the artist, he in turn will tackle contemporary artistic problems with an even greater sense of responsibility and freedom.

It is the composer himself who must be responsible in the first instance for the artistic quality of opera, symphony or song, and not the advisers and editors, the chairmen of boards and the theatre managers. Under the present “tutelage system”, the composer is “relieved” of responsibility. For example, if he takes his song to some musical establishment, one and all there consider it their duty to give him “advice”, to point out that the melodic [or rhythmic] imagery should be differently worked out, and to think up a new harmony for him. And strange as it may seem, there are some composers only too ready to agree to any revision. Abandoning all they have gone through in thought and feelings, all they have suffered in giving birth to their creation, they curl and crimp it in the stock fashion as if it were a hairdresser's dummy.

Something very similar is taking place in the operatic field. We have heard and read a great deal on this subject and I have no wish to go over it all again. It is my belief that such methods cannot possibly bring forth opera classics. “Tutelage” must go! Let the composer and librettist work conscientiously at whatever they have undertaken, *on their own responsibility*. Let us take the risk and entrust the writing of operas (and other works, too) to our best composers, librettists, playwrights and theatres, and free them from the petty tutelage of musical bodies.

Of course I do not wish to be misunderstood. I have no objection to criticism, or to the discussion of problems of composition by fellow composers, or to any assistance that may be necessary from editors and advisers. On the contrary, I consider the collective principle in our work, and strict and searching criticism, to be an essential condition for the successful development of our music.

The Union of Composers must, as its bounden duty, ensure discussion of new works. Let there be the sharpest, most impartial criticism, regardless of personalities, and let our friends the critics proffer their advice to tyros and time-honoured masters alike. But do not let such criticisms take on the character of “directives”. Our musical institutions must stop their petty surveillance of composers and give up trying to insure themselves twice over when making decisions of artistic importance. The Union of Composers must not assume the mantle of infallible “arbiter” on behalf of musical organisations. Discussion of any work on its premises must be in the nature of a free exchange of opinions—a really creative discussion. When a work of fundamental importance to a composer's developing talent is discussed at the Union, even though it is imperfect, its merits can be pointed out.

From controversy emerges truth. There should be a greater readiness to do battle for one's own standpoint, provided of course it is honestly held. For instance, I should be quite prepared to see works that have been adversely criticised in reports presented at Union discussions accepted for publication or performance. Life itself will provide a corrective to the original appraisal, if it was mistaken or prejudiced and failed to take cognisance of the real requirements of music. There are plenty of examples of this happening in the history of Soviet music, as I have no need to point out.

Much has been spoken and many papers have been filled on this subject. And yet, as far as I can see, the question has not been properly clarified. Some comrades have the wrong idea about the national element in music. They narrow down the concept, reducing it to a mere matter of borrowing melodic structure. At the same time, they regard the folk song, in quotation marks, as the sole original source for a national style. Folk songs do of course provide the richest source for musical composition, and melodic folk idiom is a most important feature in musical national character—a most important one, but not the only one.

The national concept in music is manifold. In addition to melodic characteristics, the actual musical idiom of the people enters into question, the rhythm of their dances, the special timbre of their instruments, their manner of emotional expression (the Russian expresses joy in his music differently from the Georgian, the Frenchman gives voice to his longing for home differently from, say, a negro).

Folk song intonation is by no means found in all works of music written in the national style and character.

A number of Russian classics may be cited to give convincing proof of this. I will mention only Chaikovsky's Sixth Symphony and Rakhmaninov's Second Concerto. No one could very well raise any doubts as to the national character of these works, each of which, in its own way, expresses the character and spiritual texture of the Russian.

On the other hand, a number of works might be named which develop national melodies and are decked out with all the external attributes of folklore yet are lacking in any genuine national characteristics, or any expression of the popular spirit, national life or culture. There are popular songs, with pretensions to the peasant choral style, in which, however, the national element is merely external and put on for show. No wonder such songs do not strike root among the people. They leave them cold and touch no chord in them.

The problem of national style must be approached openmindedly, without preconceived limitations or dramatic circumscriptions.

I say here and now that what we need is more songs, and more varied ones. And this means originality in approach. A song must be sincere and inspired. Its emotional content and feeling must come from the people, and it should give true expression to the thoughts and feelings of the progressive Soviet citizen. Its tune must be fresh, bright and attractive. Its national elements should not be merely an external amalgam of traditional folk song and idiom. It is quite possible to imagine magnificent songs, thoroughly national in spirit, without any of the external formal character of a folk-song.

To narrow down the concept of national music is to impoverish our art; it leads to national shortsightedness and dangerous nationalistic tendencies. This is evident from the very much mistaken attempts on the part of some musical figures in certain Soviet republics to create artificial barriers between the musical cultures of their fellow socialist nations.

Should it be necessary to recall the need for fruitful interaction between the arts of different nations and for creative links between composers belonging to different peoples?

I should like to say a few words on the composer's craft. D. Kabalevsky has made a great many valuable and valid points in his article on this problem (*Sovetskaya Musika*, 3, 1952). I fully agree with his definition: "Artistic craftsmanship is the ability to *embody a significant concept, progressive and true to life, in perfect artistic form.*"

We Soviet composers must strengthen our efforts to master this craft. To this end, above all, *we must improve our standards and make higher demands on ourselves.*

Searching criticism and mastery of one's art are mutually inter-related.

If we make higher demands on ourselves we shall raise our artistic standards. As we do so, we shall in turn make ever-fresh demands on ourselves. In carrying on the great realist tradition of the classical composers, and in taking up and developing their extremely rich creative experience, we must also remember that they were constantly dissatisfied with themselves and were implacably self-critical, continually re-examining their artistic concepts.

This in turn compelled them to further efforts without resting on their laurels.

A splendid example of such self-exacting composition was given us by Nikolai Yakovlevich Myaskovsky, an outstanding composer and one of the founders of Soviet symphonic music. He was a master in the highest sense of the word if ever there was one.

Unfortunately, there are a great many self-satisfied people among us who prefer to make demands not on themselves but on others : on the Union of Composers, on the Musical Fund, on the Music Publishing House, on the critics, and so on and so forth. They are ready to blame anyone on earth but themselves for their poor compositions. Need it be said that to be "demanding" in this sense is not only unhelpful but is actually a hindrance to the advancement of our music ?

Some interesting discussions have been held at the Union of Soviet Composers in the past few years. A number of useful articles on problems of composition have appeared in our journal. Nevertheless I feel that our criticism still avoids the most acute and stirring problems of our time, and only touches the surface of musical life in our country. It is very good to know that our musical research workers are making a thorough study of various theoretical problems and are debating the questions of "programme music", national character, melodic intonation structure, and so on. But I hardly ever come across articles on problems of contemporary style or on the general trend sought in our musical composition.

We firmly uphold the principles of realism and national character. There is not and cannot be any dispute among us as to the progressive content of Soviet music. All this is quite clear. But is not socialist-realist style still developing ? Can we possibly suppose that the works of Soviet composers will not undergo stylistic development, or that new problems, arising from new socialist realities and our advance to communism, will not create a demand for new artistic forms to correspond with this ever-changing content ? How and in what direction will our socialist art have to develop, what obstacles will it have to overcome ? These are the questions to which our theorists should try to find valid and well-founded answers.

When analysing the various problems of contemporary Soviet music and making a critical evaluation of current Soviet works, the critics should draw general conclusions and synthesise their observations in order to challenge our composers to strike out afresh.

The Soviet music critic should be possessed of the same sense of conviction and enthusiasm for his ideas as the composer. His whole activity should be imbued with creative originality.

When delving into weighty aesthetic questions, the critics should not overlook the musical interests of our people.

What are the people saying ? What do young people want to hear and sing and dance to ? What are they being offered by the organisations concerned with music on a mass scale ? Music, as we all well know, is a powerful weapon of education. But what we are not really clear about is how it happens in practice day by day.

The Soviet family of composers counts many first-class talents among its members ; as well as outstanding Russian composers working in every musical genre, our country has seen a good many talented composers appear in

the Union Republics and develop the rich national traditions of our community of Soviet peoples.

Soviet music has developed through the work of a number of important composers—M. Ippolitov-Ivanov, N. Myaskovsky, S. Prokofiev, V. Kosenko, A. Alexandrov, Z. Paliashvili, A. Spendiarov, V. Gadzhibekov.

Soviet composers of long standing, such as R. Gliere, S. Vasilenko, Y. Shaporin, and L. Revutskyn, continue to do fruitful work. D. Shostakovich, D. Kabalevsky, T. Khrennikov, V. Solovyov-Sedoi, V. Muradeli, A. Novikov, Y. Sviridov, V. Shebalin, L. Dunayevsky, K. Karayev, E. Kapp, G. Ernesaks, S. Mshvelidze, A. Balanchivadze, A. Skulte, G. Yegiazarian, and many others, have all done great service to the national art. This older generation of composers has borne the standard of realism with honour. The younger generation in the persons of B. Chaskovsky, V. Chistyakov, O. Taktakishvili, A. Babazhdanian, A. Aratunian, C. Tsintsadze, and other promising young talents, has been producing successful work.

The great and encouraging achievements of Soviet music over the thirty-six years of its splendid history must not be underestimated. All the same, we cannot rest satisfied with what we have achieved. Every new day in the life of our country poses new problems for Soviet composers. And these can be solved only among ourselves, with progressive ideas and inspired artistry. To develop and perfect Soviet music we must also develop and perfect the traditions of popular and classical art, and be quick to respond to the needs of our stirring times, never forgetting that steady forward movement is the requisite for development.

The Communist Party and the Soviet Government have provided conditions for the successful development of our native art. Our path is illuminated by the great teachings of Marx and Lenin. We can constantly sense the care and assistance of the Party's Central Committee, which is challenging us to fresh efforts to create vivid and inspired contemporary music.

It is our duty to the people and to the Party to justify their great confidence in us, and to respond with ever-fresh works in praise of our heroic times, to the glory of our country and in fulfilment of progressive communist thoughts. These works should have beauty of form and express the living spirit of our new advanced art. They must be original and spirited, restless and exciting, not all "peace and quiet, with blessings from on high".

Translated by ERIC HARTLEY.

From SOVETSKAYA MUSIKA, 11, 1953.

See also a further article on this subject by Khachaturian in *NEWS*, 1954, No. 5, p. 17.

COMEDIES YET UNBORN

Grigori Alexandrov

THERE are still no new comedies on our screens. This shows that our cinematic art is not satisfying the demands of the audience, whose many millions like comedy, miss it and wish to see it.

The Party and Government have called for a sharp rise in the output of the consumer goods in greatest demand. Does this not also mean that the production of comedies, which are in such great demand, should be sharply increased too?

As well as an increase in the quantity of output of important consumer goods, the Party and Government are demanding an improvement in quality, so that everything produced by Soviet people for Soviet people shall be good and pleasing to the eye. Does not this also mean that comedies—a genre of very broad consumer appeal—should be interesting, absorbing and, of course, funny?

Since we need many such films, the problems connected with the creation of comedies must be reiterated again and again.

Many playwrights and some producers say that what prevents them from working on comedies is the vagueness of the demands, or the number of contradictory demands, made on the comic script. Discussion on comedy ought therefore to begin with a definition of the demands that must and can be made on it.

What should Soviet comedy be like?

The answer to this question should be well founded theoretically. To give such an answer we have to study and analyse in great detail all we have produced, good and bad, in the way of comedies, to draw general conclusions from the creative practical work of masters in this genre, to winnow the grain from the chaff, and to draft lines of further development for what is new, valuable and progressive, avoiding the old mistakes.

Is it not clear that this is work for theoreticians?

But our theoreticians and cinema critics have shown themselves to be in almost a more dramatic situation than that of film comedy itself. So it is for us who have been, are or shall be working on making comedies to shoulder the duty of summing up the laws of comedy and to plan the development of this most complex and important field of creation. The reason we still have no comprehensive answers to many of the problems facing us may be the fact that attempts to solve them have so far been made only by the practical workers—script writers, comedy producers and actors. The opinions of the artists who are solving the practical problems of a genre through their creative work can plainly be no more than material for generalisations and inferences valuable in itself but no substitute for profound theoretical research, the absence of which we must deplore.

This article does not claim to be a theoretical investigation. I have set myself the modest task of expressing the general ideas occurring to me during the preparation of a new comedy, and also such isolated considerations and remarks as might be of use to theoreticians.



WHAT then should Soviet comedy be like?

A comedy must first of all be comic; that is, while having Soviet content and showing life in the light of our concepts, it should be funny and so give pleasure to the audience, because normal laughter is an expression of pleasure.

The adjectives “satirical”, “lyrical”, “musical”, and so on, all qualify the same noun “comedy”, which is commonly used to designate a spectacle that is gay, funny and cheerful.

One cannot imagine a tragic comedy. A caustic satirical work, inspired by a sharp hatred of negative aspects of life and ruthlessly holding them up to ridicule, is a comic work because it uses laughter as its weapon. Its life-asserting force lies in the high principles and ideals from the viewpoint of which the evil is being exposed.

Gay, funny, life-asserting—this is what any comic work in any genre should be. I repeat, any *genre*, for comedy itself is not a genre, but a *species* or *kind* of art which includes different genres—satire, vaudeville, revue, farce and others. As for the epithets “musical”, “lyrical”, and so on, to a great extent they only define the film’s material and mode of interpretation: a lampoon may be built from musical material, a musical comedy may be lyrical, while a sketch may be entirely satirical or belong to stolid everyday life.

We have had many fruitless discussions and arguments about which comic genre is acceptable to the art of socialist realism. Some have held that comedy about everyday life is the most realistic and so fully acceptable. Others have held that the task of exposing the evils and vices still existing in our society demands the exclusive development of satirical comedy. Others again have thought that we need character-comedy. Those who see comedy’s main function as provoking laughter are inclined to attach too much importance to the comedy of situation, incident, misunderstanding.

All this talk is based on a misconception. Worrying about strict “purity of genre” is of use only to “pure art”, a formalistic and aestheticised art divorced from pure life.

In comedy, as in all art, every genre is good except a dull one. To life’s wealth and variety of expression should correspond a wealth and variety of genres, and different genres may be combined or may succeed one another within the framework of a single work.

In reflecting new forms of life unknown to the old pre-socialist systems, and the new relationships that arise in the course of the gradual transition of Soviet society from socialism to communism, the artist cannot be shackled by canons or dogmas formerly established in art. But of course there are rules of development in comic art, to transgress which is to destroy the proper effect.

We all know that new content demands new forms of expression. The “new” should not, however, be understood as something previously quite unknown and now freshly invented, but as an enrichment by the new qualities of what was best, most advanced and most progressive in the achievements of the earlier stages in mankind’s artistic development.

What then are the new qualities on which the definition of Soviet comedy (in all its genres) should be based?

In the first place, comedy should meet all the demands made upon any product of Soviet art: like any other work, our comedy must serve communist education. The aim of Soviet art is to “contribute to the development in the members of our society of characteristics, habits and customs free from the evils and vices engendered by capitalism”. The aim of Soviet art is to “expose vices, faults and unhealthy symptoms current in human society, to show in positive artistic images men of the new type in the full splendour of their human dignity”.

Everything that runs counter to the communist ideals of our Soviet society must be ridiculed by means of comedy. The conflict between our social ideal and the evils still inherent in society is the basis for conflict in comedy.

The specific trait distinguishing comedy from other forms of art is that to achieve its aims it must use the weapon of laughter. And to realise how this weapon should be used it is natural to turn to the experience of the past, to

the remarkable heritage of classic comedy writing which served the people through the medium of laughter.

Gogol has an excellent definition of the function of laughter : laughter exists to ridicule everything that disgraces the true beauty of man. No less clearly and aptly, he said that art consists in grasping the still imperceptible peculiarity of the new and rendering it visible to all.

Laughter should be directed along two lines : exposure and condemnation of everything negative so as to rid society of it, and revealing and supporting everything positive and new so as to implant it into life.

In essence these two definitions by Gogol develop the best traditions of progressive world art. Long ago Aristotle saw the meaning of comedy in the reproduction of "the worst man". Aristophanes, Sophocles, Rabelais, Cervantes, Shakespeare, Beaumarchais, Molière exhibited such "bad men" in their satires and comedies, not as examples to be followed, but as personifications of the social evils they were exposing. Besides negative characters, many classic works have positive ones who express the most advanced ideas of the times. Such too are the traditions of classic Russian comedy, which always served the cause of progress and social justice. Even without the presence of positive heroes, the "bad men" in Gogol's *Government Inspector* or in Saltykov-Schedrin's satires served to expose the social evils of the contemporary regime no less powerfully than Chatsky in Griboyedov's *Woe From Wit*. Here laughter, and the authors themselves, with their faithful picture of contemporary life inspired by progressive social thought, were the positive heroes.

It follows that it is a mistake for certain critics and theoreticians to try to decide today whether Soviet comedy should have negative characters only or whether positive heroes should also be present, or how many negative characters may be included among a cast of positive characters (or vice versa). Such problems are artificial and scholastic. What we want is a faithful reflection of real life and of its dialectic movement and revolutionary development, in other words a reflection of the *typical* aspects of our life.

To create types is to reveal the essential, understood not as a mathematical average but as the important phenomena and trends of development in the life of our Soviet society. And this is where no reference to the classics can help. They lived and created at a different historical epoch, in a different social organisation with different social relations, and, most important of all, the trend of their ideas was inevitably limited by the philosophical concepts of their time.

The classics naturally cannot provide answers to the basic question of how a film comedy should reflect topical subjects in our socialist reality. From classic comedy we only need take its progressive tendencies, its noble traditions of service to the people and its artistic principles, its skilled craftsmanship in the artistic solution of the problems the authors set themselves. In depicting the seemingly "common human" feelings and passions of the characters—love, avarice, vanity, bigotry, and so on—they succeed in creating typical figures of great power and disclosing the social roots and political meaning and importance of the phenomena they depicted. They knew how to give shape to living, full-blooded, individual hero figures, men of flesh and blood who were at the same time embodiments of the essence and aims of some class or social group, and who expressed the clash of interests or the struggle of ideas between opposing social forces. The classics knew how to carry the story along the winding maze of the plot, developing it swiftly or slowing it down, and keeping the reader or the spectator agog with interest throughout.

The value of this craftsmanship is that its set purpose is to solve serious problems of social importance.

I have to give vent to these truisms because we have recently seen a tendency to approach comedy with reduced demands, the main condition being merely that it should be funny. At the same time a comedy built up from

material taken undistorted from Soviet actuality is assumed to be automatically incapable of being harmful or useless.

Let us now return to the question of the desirable direction for the development of Soviet film comedy and the ways in which it differs from classic comedy and particularly from the bourgeois film comedy of today

The most numerous among the many different kinds of classic comedy are those where the hero, a progressively minded person, struggles against a negative *milieu* and overcomes obstacles created by unjust social conditions and prevailing prejudices. Comedies with negative central characters (there is not a single positive character in Gogol's *Government Inspector*, nor are there any in many of Saltykov-Shchedrin's works) gave a typified picture of contemporary society, that is to say they described the same negative *milieu* that a positive hero would have had to move in had he been introduced by the authors.

What is essentially different in Soviet comedy is the fact that whether its heroes are negative or positive the action will take place in a positive *milieu*, for such is our Soviet society, with its progressive ideas, its moral and political unity, its great common aim, its social cohesion around the great ideas of communism, around what the people feel to be their own Communist Party and Soviet Government.

Any conflict transferred mechanically from a classic comedy into this *milieu* falls to pieces because it does not correspond to the truth of our life. Let us suppose Khlestakov to have arrived in one of our regional centres. Even if someone were to mistake him for an important personage and behave in the manner of the *gorodnichi*, it would be impossible for Khlestakov to meet simultaneously in the same house the heads of the local party and of Soviet organisations, the directors of the health department, of education, of social welfare, and so on. At best he would be obliged to "have a go at them" one at a time, and that too with the connivance of the head bookkeepers, who would have to register the illegal payments. All this would demand an alteration in the whole dramatic course of the comedy and of the plot, to say nothing of the moral plan, for the situation dealt with in *The Government Inspector* could arise only against the background of a different social reality.

This is why the outline of *The Government Inspector* utilised to some extent by S. Mironov in his comedy, *Crayfish*, proved unsuitable for creating a major satirical work. What resulted was the story of a petty rogue who succeeds in hoodwinking a petty bureaucrat and a few time-servers and fools working under him. The comedy does not rise to the level of a satirical generalisation because positive Soviet reality is not actively shown, being represented only by the chauffeur and a practically speechless woman secretary. Even so it is present in some details of the characters' behaviour, and above all in the consciousness of the spectator, who corrects the author as the action proceeds. Besides, the mere fact that Lensky knowingly gives himself out for the man he is not, where Khlestakov does not at first realise that he is being taken for the inspector, essentially alters the situation: in *The Government Inspector* the situation belongs to comedy, in the other play it is of the "sketch" type.

All the failures and near-successes in Soviet comedy writing are due to the fact that our comedies do not achieve a generalisation of the important aspects of real life, the typifying of characters, behaviour and people to reveal the motive forces and trends in the development of socialist society. Unlike the great master-satirists of the past, our dramatists reduce the scope of their comedies and confine themselves to depicting some particular case within the limited circle of a particular scene of action and of relations between particular characters. In their comedies they ridicule, shall we say, not bureaucracy as such but isolated bureaucrats, not servility and time-serving but isolated sycos-

phants and turncoats. Bureaucrats seem, incidentally, to enjoy especial popularity. We have a bureaucrat in L. Lench's play *Great Cares*, in N. Virta's *The End of Pompeyev*, and in a number of other works. Are there really no other evils to be dealt with? Besides, in combating bureaucracy it is not enough merely to fix upon representatives of it and show them up against a humdrum background—it should be stigmatised, emphasised, typified and scourged as a social evil hampering the advance of society towards communism.

The facts and events on which many of our comedies are built are, in themselves and in the way they have been used, sufficient merely for sketches. The power of the sketch lies in its concreteness, in the pointedness of its characters and of the scene of action. When this precision in the scene of action and in the characters is lacking in a play of this type, then it loses its telling-power without acquiring the amplitude of a broad social satire. A generalisation, and especially an artistic generalisation, is not a survey of facts, but the result of analysing them, of studying their movement and trends of development in all their living connections and interpretation. In the words of Gorky, facts are not quite artistic truth yet. One has to know how to extract the meaning from the facts and make an artistic generalisation. "You can't roast a chicken in its feathers, yet confusion of the incidental and inessential with the fundamental and typical is just what the worship of facts leads to. One has to learn how to pluck the fact's inessential feathers, how to extract its meaning." From a number of facts, the most typical one has to be selected, so as to create an artistic figure expressing the sum of the facts in a given direction, that is with a political aim.

The highest aim of Soviet society is the building of communism. Therefore every film comedy in any genre must, in the final analysis, and according to its own capacities of subject and material, promote this aim. The most effective, and therefore the most important, will be comedies dealing direct with large slices of life and tackling the principal, not the secondary, themes in our reality.

Marx's general formula for the main trend of the comic art is that the course of history itself turns outworn forms of life into subjects for comedy. "History works thoroughly and passes through a number of phases when carrying the outworn form of life to its grave. The last phase of a world-historical form is its comedy. Why does history move thus? In order that humanity shall laugh when it takes leave of the past."

"Outworn forms of life" and everything that attempts to slow down the final destruction of these forms are subjects to be comically reflected in art, material for comedy.

"There is no doubt that laughter is one of the most potent weapons of destruction. Through laughter idols fall, wreaths and precious settings crumble, and the miracle-working ikon becomes a discoloured and badly painted little picture" (Herzen). Laughter is appreciation of a phenomenon, an expression of judgment and condemnation.

The struggle against old forms of life is carried on for the sake of establishing new and more perfect forms. Hence it follows that the function of laughter is not only to destroy the old, but also to create the new.

I should like to add that we hear only about the struggle against survivals of the past. But life goes on, it develops, new relationships come into existence, and new defects also appear which did not exist in the past and which must also be combated.

Laughter is not the aim of comedy but its means. Its all-conquering power should be used to help man break away from the old mentality, to liberate him from the shackles of the bourgeois outlook and to speed up the advance towards communism.

Comedy will have fulfilled its most important tasks only when the truth of our socialist reality is reflected in its composition as a whole, in its conflict, its subject and its plot. That is why, in my opinion, it is a mistake of principle for Soviet film comedy to isolate the negative aspect from its positive *milieu*, to single out the negative exclusively without opposing to it the progressive forces of our reality. This does not mean that towards the end the negative characters have necessarily got to be reformed or at least rendered harmless by the organs of state security or state prosecution. No, evil still vigorous and very much alive must be shown as such and the spectator mobilised to struggle against it, with a suggestion of how to go about it. But the spectator has got to be allowed to decide and judge a great deal for himself. Only by encouraging the trends in social development leading to the triumph of the forces of progress can the Soviet film comedy fulfil its active educational rôle.

More than this. The happy life of the Soviet people should also provide subjects for comedy. On this plane the comedy must assert everything that is new, springing into being every day and growing and triumphing in the life of our society. Our comedy is creatively based on truthful expression of the new and the progressive, combined with a spirit of criticism and self-criticism towards everything hampering the development of society.

It may well be said that no one objects to these well-worn and redundant truisms. Quite true; in the press and in public speech no one comes out against these considerations; on the contrary, everybody approves of them. Yet in their practical work our artists do not, I think, start from these correct and theoretically accepted views. We have here a gap between how things are and how they should be.



THE STRUGGLE between the developing new and the outworn but still resisting old forms the basis of the conflict in the whole of our dramatic art. In so far as the subject is expressed in a conflict of characters, it can take on a comic colouring only when the conflict manifests itself through comical traits in the characters and in their mutual relationships. Any conflict in real life, unless it comes to a tragic end, can be seen through the prism of comedy and will not thereby lose any of its social importance or penetration.

For this reason there is no need for a comedy to seek out any special conflicts, obstacles or misunderstandings. What need is there, for instance, to invent the "personality" of a collective-farm chairman who, contrary to all logic, objects to his best girl worker marrying a nice lad from another collective farm, and then consents on condition that he wins a horse race?

It is a mistake to see conflicts in petty clashes which, as in many of our comedies, involve only petty civil servants, house managers or directors of small institutions. Not because bureaucracy or frivolity must necessarily be personified by men in exalted stations, but because an important conflict should be shown not in particular microscopic manifestations but in an essential manifestation corresponding to the political and social importance of the phenomenon chosen as the target.

Unfortunately, some authors, on the plea of taking guidance from editorial authorities or from those who decide the fate of scenarios, speculate about the choice of a hero for the future work, the profession with which to endow him and the limits within which a man of that particular profession may be held up to ridicule.

Such a procedure is a mistake from beginning to end. It is not a profession or its holder that the comedy is ridiculing, but moral traits that may belong to any man, whoever he may be.

"There is really no sin in laughing at what seems funny." Not only that, but everything blameworthy *should* be laughed at. One should not fear to ridicule phenomena which today still seem important and are widespread and

powerful, but which essentially belong to the past and are growing obsolete. Laughter is a sign of strength. To laugh at some phenomenon shows that we are above it and have left it behind, that it does not frighten us because we know it will inevitably be conquered in the course of historical development.

The creation of a work of art begins with the shaping of the subject from the author's observations of life, when the artist-citizen clearly realises the task, the trend and the social meaning of his creative effort. The "specifics" of comedy in no way affect this general principle. The writer of comedies cannot begin his work by inventing some funny situations, tricks, comic effects. The search for the means of expressing the author's ideas in the form of a film comedy must start from the perception of a deep conflict taken from life, and from the dramatic development of typical characters and heroes.



AT THE present moment we have on our agenda the production of short comic films. Such comedies have every right to existence.

However local the subject we may treat in a short comic film, however limited its material and action, it cannot exist and develop outside the great lines of Soviet art. It may not speed along broad highways, but it can and must move along by-roads and lanes or even along footpaths, though only such as run parallel to lines of communication of national importance and lead to the same destinations.

A small comedy must be built up on the basis of a large subject taken in an aspect and on a scale answering to the dimensions of the work. The limited scope of the short comedy must be used with ability, precision and subtlety, exactly as talented authors use the short story to condense a subject that could be developed into a long novel.

In our country the short comedy has not, unfortunately, been sufficiently developed. We may not succeed all at once in gaining great victories, but it is precisely to clear the path for great victories that we must develop the creation of many small comedies as widely as possible.

It might be better to begin with limited aims. Yet the suggested task of creating something like a variety-stage comic revue seems to me too circumscribed. Variety-stage art is a genre that attracts a broad but specific audience of enthusiasts. Cinema is an art for many millions of spectators of all nationalities, and it does not befit it to substitute for its educational function the screening of variety shows produced in their own particular mode and not contrived for the screen. Borrowing from the variety stage and the theatre is an easy way to fill gaps in the film repertoire, but this is not the way to further the noble and beautiful art of cinematography and film comedy. Cinematic solutions must be sought permitting the use of all the cinema's great possibilities, its incomparable powers of expression and its vast scope.

Excellent opportunities to show much in short films are afforded by comedies featuring a particular character created by a particular artist. Let us recall, for example, the Charlie Chaplin series—*Shoulder Arms*, *Easy Street*—the pictures of Glupyshkin, Max Linder, Buster Keaton, Pat and Patachon and other comic actors. They always appear in a particular make-up and portray a particular character with characteristic behaviour and reactions to his surroundings. The playwright and the producer can use such a "type" without wasting time explaining him, and can place him immediately in the necessary situations. Our talented circus artist M. Rumiantsev has created the comic type of Karandash. There is nothing to prevent Karandash (or any other similar hero) from becoming the central figure in short films. By using the creative scope, ability and character of a particular artist, the authors of the film can immediately develop swift comic action by setting off this conventional character, already familiar to the audience, against any *milieu*, using any material.

Of course, not every "typical figure" is suitable. But is it not possible to create the necessary "typical figures" drawn from our Soviet life and make them serve the interests of our society?

In this field our comic artist would win the highest title a comedy actor can wish for—"a public favourite". Many of our artists have already qualified for this title: I. Ilyinsky, M. Zharov, Y. Timoshenko, A. Gribov, F. Ranevskaya, V. Volodin, Rina Zelenaya, A. Zueva, N. Cherkasov (although the latter long since ceased to play comic parts), and many, many others. What a magnificent comic figure could be achieved, for instance, by A. Sashin-Nikolsky! In a word, we have men who can produce and help us to produce sparkling, witty, gay, cheerful and life-asserting comic works not only on a small scale, but even up to the largest, and in every conceivable genre. It is up to the playwrights (who, incidentally, do not lack worthwhile material) and to film production, whose directors must ensure the most favourable conditions of organisation and creation.

IN FULFILLING their great and complex tasks the masters of comedy should perfect and enrich the form of their works. A gay, light, happy and witty work cannot be produced without sparkle and invention, without a wealth of original interpretations by producers, actors and operatives. Questions of form and of professional skill are particularly important in comedy.

I am certain that in comedy richness of form should start with the foundation—the scenario. The comic scenario is not a narrative, nor a statement establishing the *corpus delicti*, nor a thesis on a subject chosen by the author. Yet, strange to say, all these elements—circumstantial description, statement establishing the course of events, and even didactic disquisition on good and evil—are to be found in many scenarios.

Sometimes a scenario is called a "comic film" in the credit titles merely because it contains a negative hero and some episodes capable of raising a laugh.

In a truly comic scenario everything should be comic: subject, plot, action and characters, who, if not all comic, must at least develop the satirical line of the comedy. The scenario should reflect the author's humorous appreciation of the phenomena, factors and circumstances he has chosen to show, and proper comedy methods for depicting the material selected should be assessed and used.

I am not referring to a deliberate caricature of life, a squeezing of "laughing-extract" out of every circumstance of life. By isolating the humorous side of life from its other aspects one obtains not comedy but nonsense or a lampoon. The task of the high art of comedy is to show the serious aspect of life through its humorous side, to reveal the variety and depth of the process of life, and not to divide life into the funny and the serious by showing only its humorous side.

This can be achieved only through the characters, who are the creators and sharers of events occurring in life. It seems to me that the playwright's main task in comedy is to create character-types possessing a great generalising power and giving the producer and actors generous material to be embodied on the screen.

Here arises the question of the scope of the scenario and of the actor's place in the creative process of film-making.

Our scenarios are usually overburdened with subject-matter. Alongside the basic theme there arise so many secondary ones that no space is left to realise them in terms of artistic imagery.

It is wrong to demand that everything in a comedy should be "regular", for then it would be no comedy.

It is naive to think that if the scene of action is a factory the work of the

party and trade union organisation has got to be shown and an outline of labour-protection and new methods of production thrown in.

If the comedy is about collective farmers, there is no need to go on about every urgent problem now facing agriculture as a whole. When the author of a comedy deals with such vast problems there is no room left in the film to show the basic conflict and to give a full picture of the characters, of their mentality, behaviour and mutual relationships, although this last is exactly what should form the centre of the dramatist's attention. Then only will the actors have a part to play. Goethe's well-known words about the artist's revealing himself in his limitations applies equally to comedy artists.

It is wrong for an actor who is creating a comic character to receive his material ready-made, worked out without his participation. The character should be matured by the actor in full collaboration with the dramatist and the producer throughout the entire process of creating the comedy, from its very inception by the author. Here I am in complete accord with the ideas of Igor Ilyinsky (*Iskusstvo Kino*, 8, 1953). Moreover, this applies not only to the actor, but in the same measure to all the others who help to create the comic film, who should begin working on the production together and simultaneously, as is done in the theatre. In cinema we need permanent creative teams for work on comedy, the more so as cinematic art is the most collective of arts, an art in which nothing can be achieved without a team.

I would like to stress once again how important it is for us to recall the forgotten practice of creating scenarios made to suit particular artists, and not only to recall it but to return to it, for the actor is the creative instrument by means of which the author and the producer transmit their ideas to the audience. Is it not expedient, therefore, to "play" on an "instrument" rich in the capacities that have already made him popular and to use this popularity to carry noble ideas, thoughts and feelings to the spectator with greater force? Naturally, this in no way excludes the appearance and education of new artistic forces.

Further, every reflection of real life in art is to some extent conventional. But whereas in other genres of cinematic art the task of the authors is to conceal the conventions to which they are obliged to have recourse, convention in comedy is an accepted method which fits the peculiarities of this kind of work. Convention is the comic film's element, its very nature. If one were to seek in comedy to develop the course of events as it develops in real life, one would have to give up all emphasis of character, all exaggeration and typifying. One would have to abandon eccentricity, tricks, accidents—all that enriches comedy and is its charm. But such asceticism is unnecessary. In comedy the whole rich stock of methods should be used, on one condition: the methods should cohere, and their combination should be governed by an iron logic directing all the elements of the comedy towards revealing its content, borrowed from real life and faithfully reflecting it.

In mechanics "eccentric" refers to the displacing of the pivot. If, for instance, one were to set the hub of a motor-car wheel away from the centre, the car would advance with a limp in a comic waddle. In comedy logic can be taken off the hub and placed in some unsuitable spot in order to expose the reasonableness of some phenomena and the unreasonableness of others. The displacing of logic in comedy is the basis of the extravaganza, though this does not mean that in this kind of play logic is wholly absent (or in buffoonery, tricks, misunderstandings, and so on).

Comedy must have the plausibility of the incredible.

Many apparently incredible and illogical comic methods have their own particular cunning strategy and logic—the logic of the distant aim which becomes clear when ultimately the spectator perceives all the hubs falling into place.

Such methods are quite legitimate for many genres of comedy, and it is regrettable that our scenario departments should at times rise up in arms against them. Writers of comedy are to be judged by the final results of their work and not by its appearance on paper. What seems very funny on paper may turn out dull and dreary on the screen, while some insignificant sentence may, when screened, become an episode that raises roars of laughter.

If we keep in mind the basic idea that laughter is not the aim but only the means of comedy, and regard this means only from the point of view of its fitness for the aim, then our comedies may well have stunts, grotesques and extravaganzas and we need not shrink from exaggeration, overdrawn characters or far-fetched situations.

Every means proper to comedy as a specific kind of art should be used to the utmost to fulfil our responsible and noble task in cinematic art. The Soviet comedy writers' purposefulness in creation, the direction of comedy towards revealing socially important themes from the viewpoint of progressive conceptions of life, can endow any comic method with new qualities that bourgeois comedy does not possess. There, form is self-sufficient because it serves to create a thoughtless "entertaining" spectacle that leads the spectator away from realities into a world reflecting not reality but the prejudices the ruling classes seek to implant and foster in the spectators' minds.

"Comedies should be made boldly and gaily", Stanislavsky used to say. "Simpler, lighter, higher, gayer"—this was the motto he suggested should be hung at the entrance to theatres. This is good advice to us from a great Russian producer and innovator.

There is in my opinion every reason to inscribe this motto at the entrance of film studios producing comedies, to remind us of the day-by-day, film-by-film duty of perfecting our weapons and raising the level of inspiration and the artistic skill of our creative labours. We should always advance: not one of our pictures should go over ground that has already been covered.



QUESTIONS of craftsmanship in Soviet film-comedy have so far been very inadequately worked out. Comic works have not yet been properly analysed by theoreticians and practical workers. Yet Soviet cinematography has created many such works. In the very first years there appeared such films as *Kombrig Ivanov* and *Red Imps*, followed by *The Cigarette-Girl from the Mosselprom* (in which the comic talents of N. Ilyinsky and M. Zharov glittered for the first time), *The Cutter from Torzhok*, *Two Friends*, *A Model and A Pal*; in a word, over seventy-five highly successful comedies. A study of these films for the details of building up comic character, of weaving the plot, and so on, would be most profitable.

Even those comedies of the sound-film era that still live in our memory (and the best of them on the screen) are merely glanced at occasionally without any general conclusions being made from them or any summing-up of the results of our labour being made.

Numerous characters were shown in these comedies, but only a few have survived to this day. Why is this so? What endows a character with life or brings it to an untimely end? We have not sought any answer to these questions.

The word *obraz* (image, figure) is connected with the verb *obrazovat'* (to form). At the same time the word *obraz* designates an ikon, and actually not the ikon in general, but only part of it, the "main plan". In this meaning the word *obraz* stems from the word *obrez* (a cutting). During the Tatar invasion, when monasteries were being urgently evacuated, it was difficult to transport large ikons on pack-animals, and they were therefore cut down, the idea being that the most important thing was to preserve the faces, since hands, legs and

other details could always be painted in again later on. Later these *obrez* were called *obraz*.

It seems to me that in art too it is important to show how the character is "formed" and what is the "line of cutting" of the artistic figure, that is deciding what can be cut out as inessential and what is to be given prominence.

We frequently build up a figure in straight lines, sometimes robbing it of human features and painting it all in one colour. A character is endowed with every known virtue, producing an ikon instead of a living portrait, not the life of a hero, but a chapter from *The Lives of the Saints*. This method is unfit for tragedy or for drama, let alone comedy.

Yet laughter and humour should not be entirely farmed out to comedy and evicted from other forms of art. The word *humour*, incidentally, comes from a Latin word meaning moisture. Humour might be called the oil needed to lubricate the machinery of narration. The meaning of this definition goes deep. In drama and in epics, too, humour must be present, and the more humour is introduced into any work, the better for that work (which then comes closer still to the truth of life, where humour accompanies nearly every event or phenomenon), and for film comedy too.

The art of comedy is a sniper's art. And the weapon must be looked after with care, tested, cleaned, kept free from rust, and regularly aimed!

Translated by T. SHEBUNINA.

From *ISKUSSTVO KINO*, 11, 1953.

THACKERAY

in Moscow



THE name of one of the greatest of English realist writers, William Makepeace THACKERAY (1811-1863), is widely known in the Soviet Union. His brilliant novels *Vanity Fair*, *The History of Henry Esmond*, *The Virginians*, and other works, have met with well-deserved recognition among Soviet readers.

Since the establishment of the Soviet regime Thackeray's works have been published in the USSR in Russian, Esthonian, Lithuanian, Georgian and English, in impressions totalling 488,000 copies.

On the ninetieth anniversary of his death, which falls today, the Union of Soviet Writers, the All-Union Society for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries (voks), and the Gorky World Literature Institute of the USSR Academy of Sciences are holding a Thackeray commemoration evening.

A. V. SOFRONOV will open the proceedings with introductory remarks, and an address on *Thackeray's Work* will be given by A. A. ELISTRATOVA, Doctor of Philology. The evening will conclude with a concert.

From *VECHERNAYA MOSKVA*, 24.12.53.

Readers will be interested to learn that the Thackeray evening was attended also by Mr. G. Alexandrov, who had then only shortly returned from his visit to this country, and whose article on comedy in films appears on another page of this issue. Photographs of the occasion may be seen at the SCR office.

The Renaissance of the Dance

V. Kamenev

WHY did a few Soviet dancers, not particularly well presented, arouse as much enthusiasm last November as the entire Diaghilev Ballet Company when it opened its first season in a most magnificent manner?

To answer this question, let us refer to a recently published book, *The Diaghilev Ballet*, by S. L. Grigoriev. We draw from it the same conclusion as had emerged from our own observation of Diaghilev's enterprise. During the first few seasons we saw great dancers in Fokine's romantic masterpieces, and later Massine revealed his creative genius as a choreographer and his superb artistry as a dancer. But as time went on, Diaghilev became cut off from the artistic sources of his country, and a phase of decadence followed. André Levinson was right in saying that Diaghilev sacrificed the dance to the exigency of his preferred arts—music, painting and *décor*, the result of which was a *spectacle d'art*, magnificent and composite, but one where the dancer played an auxiliary role. Indeed, ballet is dancing first of all, just as opera is singing.

Various young companies which were formed after Diaghilev's death started at a disadvantage—at the point where he had abandoned his chase after *le dernier cri*. The result could not have been other than a decline of their young art before the companies had time to mature, acquire a tradition and create their own classical school on solid foundations. In consequence the dance has suffered so much that it has now become necessary to supplement it on occasion by singing or declamation. In most modern ballets it is replaced by posturing or acrobatics. Furthermore, some choreographers indulge in suggestive naturalism, substituting eroticism for lyricism, and eventually turn their efforts to bestial themes, or else produce ballets without a theme, which look like classroom exercises.

That is why the public responded with such enthusiasm when they saw a Renaissance of the dance last autumn. Some of the criticism of Alla Shelest's dancing, however, was destructive, as were remarks made about Ulanova when at the Maggio Musicale in 1951 she upset all previous standards of perfection.

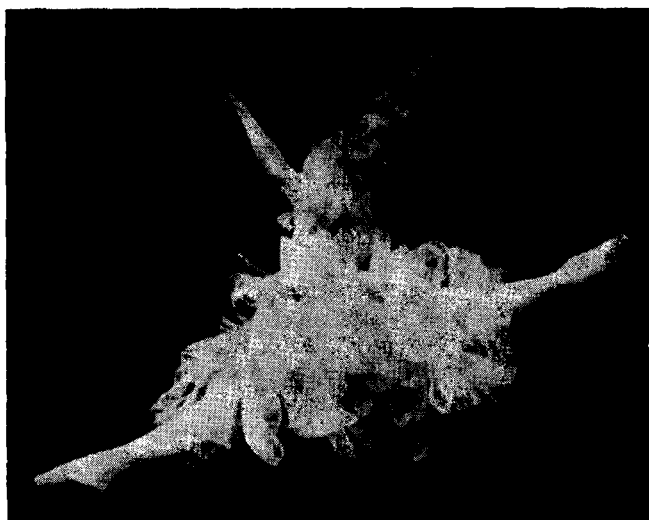
Technically, Shelest is a very strong ballerina, possessing a steel *pointe* and performing most difficult steps without effort, thus creating the illusion that what she does is very easy. Her *pirouettes* are almost incredible in the number of *tours*. As a rule, a great ballerina does not do more than two complete *tours* in a *pirouette*, at the most three, whereas Shelest usually does four, and in the finale of the *adagio* from Act II of *Swan Lake* (Act III of the original scenario) she did nine. According to Professor Vaganova numerous *tours* are accessible only to modern technique. The sparkling perfection of Shelest's *pirouettes* has now been caught by the cine-camera in a scene from Khachaturian's ballet *Gayaneh*.

Shelest's *grand jeté* is equally amazing—a light, high leap, covering almost half the stage, with her legs extended in a straight horizontal line. Her *arabesque* is Russian in style, which eliminates the defects of both French and Italian *arabesques*. The body is inclined forwards, the back is not flaccid but energetically concave, gripped in the waist, the arm is stretched somewhat behind the second position.

In the French *arabesque* the pose is flaccid, the waist is not gripped, the body is not stretched but passively inclined forwards, the arm is artificially held in the second position and therefore looks dead and inexpressive. The



Anna
PAVLOVA
*showing
" broken
wrist ".*



Alla
SHELEST
*showing
" grand
jeté ".*

Italian *arabesque* eliminates flaccidity of pose, the body is gripped in the waist but not inclined, the back is held straight, the arm is sharply thrown back from the second position. Some critics professed not to like the bent knee of Shelest's raised leg in an *arabesque*. I have not heard of an *arabesque* of any nationality in which the knee is bent, nor, I am sure, has Shelest, but I know that the fundamental difference between *arabesque* and "*attitude*" is that the knee is bent in the latter.

Shelest's flexibility is such that she bends back like the stem of a flower. Her *port de bras* is remarkable for fluidity of movement. Her arms are most expressive and alive from the shoulder to the finger tips. They have a soft outline and are free from abrupt or jerky gestures. She has not the common fault of raising or shifting back her shoulders in *port de bras*, the movement is done by her arms alone, and chiefly by the superb use of the elbow joint. And yet it has been said that her *port de bras* was marred by "broken wrists". It is not clear, but one can guess, what is meant by this unfortunate expression. Pavlova, Trefilova and other great ballerinas had the same imaginary "fault", as can be seen from the illustration.

From a young pupil in a Soviet school nothing more is required to begin with than a correct position of the hand in relation to the whole arm; the hand should not be bent too much at the wrist and should be on the level of the bend at the elbow, the point of which should be invisible; but when she has acquired the mastery of *port de bras* her hand begins to "play" at the wrist. After all, the wrist joint does exist for some purpose, otherwise the hand would stick out rigidly like a fork. Shelest was a pupil of Professor Vaganova, whose system was introduced into this country by Volkova in her teaching of leading British dancers. Therefore the so-called "broken wrists" are not a Soviet monopoly.

Shelest was criticised also for faulty carriage of the head and shoulders. It may be possible to pass one of the most difficult examinations in the world at the Leningrad School of Ballet (previously the Mariinsky)—which has been in existence for 215 years—and yet fail elsewhere, but it is odd that the examiners should be supposed to have been so blind as to give the title of *prima ballerina* to a dancer who was unable to hold her head and shoulders according to the canons of their traditional classical school. In *The Diaghilev Ballet*, S. L. Grigoriev says: "Diaghilev believed that a ballet such as *The Sleeping Beauty* could be adequately performed only by dancers brought up in the tradition of the Mariinsky and of Petipa—in which opinion, of course, he was perfectly right."

Based on traditional foundations, technique has greatly progressed in the USSR, and has far outstripped the feats of pre-revolutionary times. Take, for example, a beautiful and extremely difficult new invention based on an old classical step, the *pas ciseaux*. I do not know what they call this new *pas* in Russia, but it is *ciseaux en tournant*. It was breathtaking as performed by Shelest in the Shostakovich waltz.

Equally new and impressive for their ethereal beauty were the "lifts" performed by Shatilov and Shelest. Critics differed in their opinions about them. One called them sensational, another complained of the free use of "lifts" in the excerpts from *Romeo and Juliet*; he also complained that "lifts" in the "Vision Scene" from *The Sleeping Beauty* destroyed the conception of an elusive vision. It would be too laconic to retort: "But what lifts! Have we ever seen such lifts before?" It is preferable to substantiate the argument. Style depends to a great extent on the available material and technique. Fokine would not have created *Le Spectre de la Rose* and *La Mort du Cygne* without Nijinsky and Pavlova. Similarly, the use of "lifts" requires a light ballerina and a strong, virile partner. The description of Ulanova as "a marvel of lightness" and of Kondratov as "a pillar of strength" applies equally well to Shelest

and Shatilov. "Lifts" are eminently suitable as an expression of lofty aspirations and sentiments in *Romeo and Juliet*. As to *The Sleeping Beauty*, it is difficult to see why Princess Aurora, as an incorporeal and imponderable vision, cannot be allowed by English critics to float upwards through the air. Anything and everything is possible in a vision, a dream or a fairy tale.

Technique for Shelest is only a means to the creation of an artistic image. As Juliet she is profoundly moving when, supported by Shatilov, she stops in an *arabesque*, and without changing her pose kneels down on one knee before the Madonna; and in the scene of parting from Romeo, when she transmutes the words of Shakespeare into plastic language. In the contrasting role of Odile she uses her brilliant technique to convey the temptation of the prince without once descending to a display of mere virtuosity.

Shatilov, beautifully proportioned, elegant, masculine, reveals to the present generation the real *danseur noble*. His *jetés coupés en tournant* show a great virtuosity of technique. This *pas* is a test of real accomplishment. His gift as an artist is seen in the lyrical charm with which he imbues a choreographic image of Romeo.

As to Georgi Farmanyants, I will content myself with stating that the younger generation who never saw Nijinsky have now seen his equal.

The art of the folk dance as supremely illustrated by Galya Ismailova and the Piatnitsky Trio is unfortunately beyond the scope of this article. It is a tragedy for the repute of criticism here that after all these years English experts described their Russian dance as a "Gopak", which is Ukrainian, and the Ukrainian dance of Farmanyants as "Russian character dancing"!

The costumes, except those in the folk dances and the beautiful Ukrainian costume of Farmanyants, were poor and badly cut. This had not been expected from a country whose painters effected a great revolution in decorative art when Diaghilev brought them to Western Europe. In recent Soviet films we have seen some magnificent *décor* and many costumes in perfect taste. Until we are able to see the entire ballets as staged in Moscow and Leningrad we have to suspend judgment on their decorative aspect. What we did see was a Renaissance of the dance for which we are truly grateful. We wish now to see its apotheosis—Galina Ulanova.

SCR PROVINCIAL SECRETARIES

Readers of THE ANGLO-SOVIET JOURNAL may wish to get in touch with the Secretary of the local SCR Committee so that they may be kept informed of local SCR activities. The following list is appended for their convenience.

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THE DISTRICT PROCURATOR

Vladimir Pomerantsev

WHAT does the existence of a large number of complaints mean ? Is it a good or a bad sign ? Does it mean that the state of things is rotten, or on the contrary well-ordered ? Do not be in too much of a hurry to reply ; or to replace those question marks by exclamation marks. An abundance of complaints on the desk of the President of the District Executive Committee, the leader of the district party organisation, or the District Procurator, may be evidence of either of two flatly contradictory things : either that the official in question is useless and that there is much public dissatisfaction in the district or that he is a first-class leader, fair, approachable, wise, and that people flock to him with their troubles.

The mere number of complaints made in the district is no guide to the state of affairs there. In one district there may be only ten and this modest evidence of peace and quiet may be highly deceptive : in another there may be hundreds, yet it is quite possible that here things could not be going better. It is precisely in districts where observance of the law has become habitual that even the slightest transgressions are sharply taken up.

The thoughtful campaigner for law and order gets uneasy at the absence of complaints. Grounds for complaint very probably exist, but without information the trouble cannot be located and cured. So he himself takes the initiative in approaching people who may be able to tell him of infringements of the law and point out shortcomings, scandals, corruption and everything else that holds us back.

We recently had the privilege of meeting, in Yaroslav region, Konstantin Pavlovich Novikov, Procurator of the Rostov District, who is one of these persistent inquirers. He is of good physique and straightforward features, which we will not proceed to describe, because a man of different physiognomy might still possess the same fund of energy. It is immaterial what colour eyes the procurator has, so long as they are penetrating.

Novikov has no peculiar features or mannerisms. Sometimes his tread is as heavy as a peasant's, at other times as light as a boy's. He will read one case with a frown of concentration, head resting on hand ; another he will skim through quickly and jot down his decision.

You cannot form an opinion of Novikov from his appearance ; you must observe him interviewing people, raising matters before the District Executive Committee, speaking at public meetings, appearing before the people's court. You will hear the capable, expressive words of one really versed in public affairs.

He is a district official with the rank of jurist, first class ; but he is one of that highly important class of people, the campaigners for law and order. He copes successfully with many a local legal problem which would baffle the erudition of a city lawyer. And it is not every district procurator, however well informed on collective farm affairs, who is able to produce such harmony as Novikov can in the complications and intricacies of rural life. To do so, one must be a procurator by birth, by character, by inclination. And have a Party heart. Large enough for everything. . . .

Much of Rostov District is devoted to growing vegetables, but by no means all. There are also large fruit gardens ; cattle-breeding co-operatives ; fishing areas. There are bogs which are neither dry land nor water, which produce neither crops nor fish. In some collective farms a labour-day means a

substantial income, and the farmer makes a fuss if he is stood off for two days. In others, people work only the compulsory minimum of days and rush off. So there are plenty of problems and worries, and very varied they are.

Moreover, the collective farms are scattered. Some are twenty-five miles from the district centre. Places beyond the lake are not always accessible. The telephone is not by any means installed everywhere, and the Procurator is not provided by his superiors with a car. Yet Novikov manages to check an average of twelve farms a month. He knows personally not only the chairmen and bookkeepers of all the farms, but nearly all the members as well. And everybody in the district knows him. I could not help noticing that many complaints were addressed not just to the procurator's office, but personally to the District Procurator, and by his name. No wonder everybody knows him : his visits are always eventful, leaving some rejoicing and others repining !

I shall never forget a scene I once witnessed in a procurator's waiting room. About eight peasants were waiting to see him. No one was being admitted to his office, where he was chatting with some important visitor. The chat was a long one. From the waiting room the conversation could be heard just winding up and drawing to a close, only to break out afresh. People waited patiently. They slipped out for a smoke and came back. If they tried to exchange a word with each other, the typist at once rebuked them. Finally the door opened and the important visitor departed. People cheered up. But hot on his heels came the procurator himself. He cast an irritated glance at the people waiting, and without inviting anyone into his office hastily started asking them : " What is it ? What's your trouble ? " And then something unexpected happened. The first to be questioned screwed up his eyes, gazed appraisingly at the procurator for a second or two, and without a word walked out. Then, as if at a signal, another walked out, and a third. The bewildered procurator was aghast. No doubt he was taught a lesson he will never forget.

But people come to the Rostov Procurator as readily as he goes to them. Novikov does not have fixed consulting hours. As long as he is there, no one will have to go away without having seen him. No visitor is ever too late. " Why should anybody have to know ", Novikov asked me, " what my office hours are ? Why, he may have come twenty miles to see me."

On market days he has a specially large number of visitors, and he or his assistant is continuously on duty. " Come in, come in ", says the Procurator, seeing someone on the doorstep. " Come along. Much better to talk with your own voice than make the door squeak, as the saying is." It is not surprising that with such a procurator the visitor unburdens himself fully. He will not only explain his own personal trouble but also air all the grievances there are with the management, on the farm, in the team. Cases are constantly brought to light this way.

Here comes an old woman :

—Help me, Konstantin Pavlovich ; life is unbearable.

—Has your daughter stopped you using the stove again ?

—Yes, she has. And there's no reasoning with her. She says she's the mistress now, and so on.

—Have you thought of separating, by any chance ?

—What ! How could I leave her ? And my grandchildren ? Impossible ! Just give her some advice, teach her, suggest something.

The Procurator looks at his diary and makes a note.

—All right, mother. I'll be round at the end of the month. I'll see your daughter and have a word with her. Don't worry.

The visitor starts to thank him. She goes to the door, then returns.

—And I'll tell you this, too, as you're an honest man. Our agent, who collects the taxes, is a bit of a——. Why do they go and give an official job to a man who's got a weakness for drink ? They ought to say to him : you

won't do. He's drunk in the morning, drunk at night. And he never gives you a receipt . . . It'll turn out badly, you mark my words.

—Oh, it's like that, is it ? All right, mother, I'll be round this week.

And when she has gone, he anxiously rings up the Chief of the District Revenue Department . . .

The chairman of a collective farm has more complicated matters to raise. The director of peat production has enticed away some of the women farmers by offering them high wages, and they have thrown up their work at the height of the season. . . . The herdsmen need oilskins and wellingtons or they won't go out on wet days. The management are willing to spend 3,000 roubles on protective clothing, but are doubtful whether they are legally entitled to incur such an expense. . . .

The chairman has many questions, and the Procurator acts at once. He writes a stern memo to the peat director. He rings up the Head of the District Agricultural Department and makes a note of the information he gets in reply. He continues his conversation with the chairman :

“ You must give them to the herdsmen. And I shan't object. As long as they're your own herdsmen, not hired. If they're hired, I shall object. What does your constitution say ? It permits the hire only of persons with specialist qualifications. But you hire herdsmen. You are wasting labour-days. Last time I saw what your hired herdsman was up to. He himself selected some assistant herdsmen and became a sort of contractor. And these assistants do not divide up the herd and do not know how to pasture them. The cows do not eat as much as they trample down. The herdsmen do not move them on or change their pasture. The result is your milk yield is pretty low. And you, you visit the meadows, have a look round, sneer at the men, and that's all you do to train them. I have already suggested to the District Committee that herdsmen's classes should be formed. But as regards working conditions for herdsmen, you needn't fear any objection from me. They get wet, and can't get dry—of course they must have better conditions.”

Sometimes there are dozens of visitors in one day. But it is the Procurator's personal journeys to the collective farms that specially encourage law-abiding behaviour in the district. He goes through all the decisions taken by the management and lodges appeals to the farm's general meeting or objections for consideration by the Executive Committee of the District Soviet against every infringement of members' rights or breach of the regulations.

The chairman has struck off twenty labour-days for unsatisfactory work. . . . The management failed to pay a bonus to members for calves reared. . . . The bookkeeper wrote off 170 stolen hens, thus relieving the thieves of liability. . . . A candidate for chairman did not receive the requisite number of votes,* but was declared elected. . . . Nothing escapes the Procurator's scrutiny. Thus the confidence of the people that the rights conferred on them by the Constitution and Collective Farm Regulations will be rigorously enforced is strengthened.

Novikov's perseverance has had invaluable results in this province. For example, he has suppressed a grievance of which women in other districts still frequently complain ; the belated recording of work accomplished. Now you no longer meet with that once-so-common complaint : “ I worked on the hillocks, on the slopes, in the fields, I don't remember exactly how much ; but the team leader has only got me down for about half what I really did.” Sometimes labour-days were recorded only once every two or three months. But after the Procurator, sparing no efforts, had everywhere checked accounts, and after

* Two-thirds of the members of the collective farm must be present at meetings for the election of the chairman, and fifty per cent of those present must have voted for him.—ED.

a meeting of chairmen and team-leaders summoned by the local authorities, the recording of labour-days came to be carried out smoothly.

When Novikov recently came across a new case of belated recording, he at once lodged a complaint with the Executive Committee of the District Soviet. "Team-leaders mustn't imagine that we have checked up once and for all and won't worry any more", he explained to me. He is not accommodating in these matters.

And he is not one for half-measures, let me add.

The energy he displayed in the suppression of a very widespread and serious evil—delayed settlement of accounts—was described by People's Judge Trunilova as that of a hundred men. Various organisations would take delivery of collective farm produce, or use the farm's services or labour, and were in no hurry to pay for them. The Procurator directed the debtors to settle up, but without effect. They argued that they also had debts due to them, and that they had current expenses and payments to meet. The heads of these organisations were persons in daily social contact with the Procurator. That did not deter him, nor did the enormous amount of work involved. He got the collective farms to give him all their orders and receipts for goods and services, drew up statements of claim and brought proceedings in the People's Court against his own good friends, intervening in the name of the State to demand payment of many a long-despaired-of debt.

The reader will now understand why a great quantity of complaints and demands may sometimes testify to a scrupulous regard for law and order. In a district where laws are disregarded, the collective farmer will despair of getting justice, and will not trouble to lodge a complaint. He will not air his grievance to an unsympathetic person, and will not even seek information. But Novikov gets down to brass tacks at once.

The eye of the Procurator is all-seeing. It penetrates to the remotest collective farm. Most frequently of all, of course, it alights on the District Militia's remand prison. Woe betide the militiaman if the Procurator discovers a prisoner whose arrest has not yet been reported to him. Here there is no need to lodge a complaint—the investigating bodies are directly subordinate to him.

He checks all investigations being undertaken by the local militia, and if he discovers unfounded ones he becomes formidable. His views on the personal inviolability of the citizen do not always coincide with those of the militia.

The last time they diverged, for example, was the case of the samovar. Some girls were walking through the forest carrying a large mended old samovar. Two lads met them and started being impudent. The girls got frightened and ran off, leaving their samovar. The lads lugged it home, and the next day they were arrested for robbery. A whole case was made out of it. But when the Procurator questioned them, it turned out that they had picked up the samovar because they didn't know what to do and did not like to leave it in the forest. On such incidents are charges sometimes based.

But cases which the Procurator brings before the court are sensible and really necessary ones. The tax-collector who has squandered on drink the money he has collected from the farms will find himself in the dock; but Novikov does not believe in making a criminal case out of an escapade.

In this he differs sharply from another procurator, who made a big case of embezzlement of socialist property out of cases where some collective-farm eggs were fried. The rhetoric displayed by this procurator in his opening speech for the prosecution was so banal as to make you feel ill. The speaker, in the procurator's brown uniform with green piping, invoking the rigours of the law in a trifling matter, was but an empty uniform. He gave us the words on his instrument, but his instrument was out of tune, and the audience were uncomfortable, unhappy.

The Rostov Procurator brings cases only against genuine embezzlers and real thieves. Courts do not here, as they still too often do elsewhere, dismiss cases brought by the Procurator as frivolous. Judge Trunilova, who takes her court work very seriously, says of Novikov that he never brings an unnecessary case.

Novikov showed me graphs and card-indexes. "As you see, thefts are falling. I don't say fast, but by about ten per cent every year. And crime in general is diminishing. You see the graph for murders has been at zero since 1950. Cattle stealing and arson are things of the past. There still remain rowdiness and breaches of the peace."

There are many cases in the office, not because lawlessness has increased, but because people complain more readily. The Procurator's men are linked with the people.

The reader who is unfamiliar with the substance and scope of a procurator's work may get an idea of its exceptional variety from a few statistics. Last year the Procurator carried out ninety-six checks on the observance of the law in collective farms, arising out of which he made thirty representations to various local bodies, lodged dozens of complaints with the Executive Committee of the District Soviet, drew up fifty-two orders written to investigating magistrates to take up cases, himself intervened in hundreds of civil actions before the People's Court, and appeared in person to conduct the prosecution in many criminal cases.

During the same period the Procurator conducted six classes in law for chairmen of collective farms, four for bookkeepers, four for chairmen of rural soviets and eight for secretaries of rural soviets. In all more than a thousand citizens attended these classes. The Procurator attended all the meetings of the Executive Committee of the District Soviet and all those of the bureau of the District Committee of the Party, of which he is a member. He has only one assistant, young E. A. Rukavishnikov. These facts may legitimately give food for thought to those who can only get through their work with the assistance of a large staff.

"But you know," says Novikov, "many of our present troubles will disappear in a year or two. Great drainage schemes are under way. They are already partly under construction, and the remainder soon will be. The collective farms will flourish like green bay trees. Then there won't be half the problems that arise today."

Yes, there are still many marshes and deserts in the Rostov district; agricultural technique is still insufficiently exploited, and consequently many collective farms in the district still live poorly. The Procurator's unsparing energy is now directed principally to putting right all kinds of economic matters. Of course he does not replace the managements, but he regulates relationships as representative of the law.

Robberies, murder and arson have become obsolete in the district, but there still persist many breaches of labour discipline and civil liberties; when this is overcome, other questions will arise in new surroundings, and the centre of attention of the Procurator will shift as life develops. But a real Procurator, keen and tireless, whether his name be Novikov or Sidorov, will always be on watch for observance of the law, as will any Soviet worker who knows what he lives for and what values he is defending.

*Translated by DUDLEY COLLARD.
From OGONYOK, 25, 1953.*

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See *The Rights and Duties of Executive Committees of District Soviets*, by A. A. Karp, *ANGLO-SOVIET JOURNAL*, Vol. XI, No. 3. Also *Soviet Legal Administration*, SCR Legal Bulletin No. 28.

SCR

Holiday Summer School

September 1954



THIS year, in response to numerous requests from members and friends, the SCR is organising a one-week holiday summer school, from September 4-11, at Wortley Hall, a fine old mansion on the edge of the beautiful Derbyshire dales near Sheffield.

The tuition will be comprised in six discussion lectures, with daily beginners' classes and conversation groups for those wishing to learn or practise the Russian language.

The holiday facilities include billiards, chess, fishing, table-tennis, tennis, and so on, as well as many walks or trips to neighbouring beauty spots. There will be a members' bar, and two film shows and a musical evening form part of the week's programme.

All-in charge £6.0.0

This covers four meals a day, accommodation, tuition and all sports facilities and entertainments, but does **not** include travel to and from Wortley Hall, or organised coach trips.

Advance Booking: Deposit £1.10.0

Book now to ensure a place

(Children under 15 half price)

Provisional Time-Table of Lectures

- Sunday, Sept. 5:** Andrew Rothstein, "The Cultural History of the Peoples of the USSR."
Monday, Sept. 6: Alderman W. M. Hyman, Chairman, West Riding Education Committee. "Soviet Education."
Tuesday, Sept. 7: Dr. R. L. Meek, Lecturer, University of Glasgow. "Recent Economic Developments in the USSR."
Wednesday, Sept. 8: Dr. S. M. Manton, F.R.S. "Soviet Science."
Thursday, Sept. 9: Dr. A. Kettle, Lecturer, University of Leeds. "The Work of the Soviet Writer."
Friday, Sept. 10: K. W. Watkins, B.Sc. (Econ.), "Future Prospects of Anglo-Soviet Economic and Cultural Relations."



TO reserve a place in this Holiday Summer School, write to The Organiser, SCR, 14 Kensington Square, London, W.8., stating whether or not you wish to make use of the language tuition facilities, and enclosing (per person) either £1/10/- deposit or £6 full payment. Book early to avoid disappointment.

Book Reviews

SOVIET LAW

Law and Social Change in the USSR. John N. Hazard. (Stevens and Sons Ltd., London, 300 pp., 25/-.)

WHEN a professor of law writes on "Law and Social Change" in the USSR, or in any other country, the reader might be forgiven for laying down the book in despair on learning from the preface that the professor who sets out to write on such a topic has some doubt whether "there is an institution in operation within the USSR which can properly be called 'law'". But if one takes courage to continue reading, one is, I feel, then entitled to expect that the book will largely deal either with the effect of jurisprudence or legal principles on the social changes and developments in the country or—vice versa—with the effects of those changes and developments on jurisprudence and legal principles.

The book scarcely touches either topic. In its eleven chapters, the author, displaying immense industry in research but not much discrimination as to the value of his sources, dilates on Trade and Commerce, State Planning, the Political System, Crime and Punishment, Bureaucracy, Collectivism, Trade Unions, Copyright and Patents, Social Services and Industrial Accidents, Marriage and Divorce, and the Soviet Attitude to International Law. Almost the only connection that figures in the book between these various topics and the law is to be found in the fact that decrees and laws have, of course, had to be passed in order to operate policy decisions on the topics; but that is a barren subject for those who are led by the title, and by the author's reputation, to expect something more closely related to law as a living science. The various chapters are much more like a series of essays on various topics, marred by unconscious attempts to relate them to the law, handled too briefly to give complete or vivid pictures, and dealing in the main with matters that have been written about and around pretty often already.

One redeeming feature is that every now and then, for a page or two, the author really goes deeper, and studies the interaction of legal principles and social change; when he does this, the book comes to life; but generally the view it gives of the USSR is flat rather than "in the round", and one feels either that it is too long since the author was in the Soviet Union, or that to appreciate and describe changes and developments in the USSR calls for

more understanding of socialism than he seems to possess.

There is also a redeeming feature in the citation of a good many decisions of Soviet courts, which give lively glimpses of life and practical problems in the country.

In the last chapter, which deals with the attitude of the USSR to international law—which seems somewhat remote both from social change in the country and from any law that could be related to social change—the author permits himself, unconsciously, to express as many clear errors and misrepresentations about the USSR as would keep the State Department running for a week. I imagine that the very air of the U.S.A. today, even in universities, makes it impossible to see straight. Mr. Hazard has at any rate the excuse that, when stating the conventional American case for the legality of intervention in Korea, he was writing before Syngman Rhee's Ambassador in the U.S.A. blurted out over New York television the fact that South Korea started the war; but for other errors he can blame only the atmosphere.

The lay-out and type of the book are extremely good.

D. N. PRITT.

CAUCASIAN TERRAIN

Caucasian Battlefields. W. E. D. Allen and the late Paul Muratoff. (Cambridge University Press, 70/-.)

HIGH politics have hinged on the Caucasus on many vital occasions during the past century and a half, particularly British high politics. This imposing and scholarly tome, austere sub-titled *A History of the Wars on the Turco-Caucasian Border, 1828-1921*, may, therefore, be regarded as the military-political adumbration of a theme long of central importance to British policy.

The authorship of the work is itself significant. Paul Muratoff was an émigré Moscow historian of medieval art and military affairs. Captain Allen is a highly cultivated Ulster Tory politician, Russian and Turkish linguist, military man, special correspondent and general spier-out of the land. His books on Georgia (1932) and the Ukraine (1940) testified to his close interest in the borderlands of the USSR. Before the

war Captain Allen had some leanings towards the Mosleyites; during the war he was attached to the British Embassy in Turkey.

It is impossible to escape the conclusion that this highly documented study of the military topography of the Caucasus, from the Russo-Turkish War of 1828-29 up to World War I and the beginnings of foreign intervention against the young Soviet Republic after 1917, is intended primarily as a text book for the staff college. The analysis of past campaigns and engagements has no remote and academic flavour about it; the unmistakable undertone is one of preparing top-level strategists and tacticians to think in terms of the Caucasian terrain. And there is a perceptibly wistful note about the description of the blunders of the counter-revolutionary Daghestan mountaineers which led to the final crushing of their insurrection by the Red Army in 1921.

In passing, it may be noted that Captain Allen, discussing in some detail the British intervention in Baku in 1918 led by General ("Stalky") Dunsterville, draws a veil of total silence over the atrocious murder of the twenty-six Baku Commissars. This outrage, whose thirty-fifth anniversary was sorrowfully and bitterly commemorated throughout Soviet Transcaucasia last September, was without doubt the biggest crime committed by, or under, British command during the Churchillian interventionist years. Mass slaughter of leading personalities who have voluntarily accepted an offer of safe conduct is not normally considered a traditional British procedure; perhaps Captain Allen's suppression is due to a certain sense of shame.

On the wider historical considerations of British concern with the Caucasus this work is sketchy. The key period is roughly the middle third of last century, when British agents were positively overrunning the area, smuggling arms to the tribesmen, promising them the earth if they would revolt against the Russians, and in their propaganda for home consumption proclaiming Caucasia as the Achilles heel of the Russian colossus.

Passing reference is made to some of these agents—Longworth, Bell, Spencer—but it is admitted that the policy of which they were the operational expression "has not been examined in detail by a modern English historian". Such an examination, indeed, might expose a little too much; it would certainly show that a powerful section of Britain's rulers were concerned to ensure the constant aggrandisement of Britain by hampering the development of Russia, and that the "liberal" declamations about the little Caucasian peoples rightly struggling to be free were no more than a smokescreen. All of which has its significance for the middle twentieth century as it had for the middle nineteenth.

ALLEN HUTT

TENDENTIOUS GEOGRAPHY

Asia and European Russia. Thomas Pickles. (Dent, 4/9.)

The Soviet Union in Maps: Its Origins and Development. Ed. G. Goodall. (George Philip Son, 4/6.)

THE attribute these two books share is not so much geography as politics—of the "cold war" brand—and their approach is not that of developing friendly understanding so much as that of "knowing your enemy".

Mr. Pickles's inclusion of the European part of the USSR in a geography of Asia is an indication of the bias that pervades his illustration of "the relationships between natural phenomena and human activities", the establishment of which is a prime object of his book. This bias is revealed in the first pages when, reviewing the geological history of Asia, he says: "In the west a great gulf stretched, time and again, from the Arctic to the Caspian, as if nature could not quite decide whether to make two continents or one. Is it not strange that this same region today poses the great question to humanity: 'Two worlds or one?' as a symbol of the conflict between democracy and communism?" And again in his first pages on the USSR he says: "Can it be a mere accident that the world's largest plain has become the world's largest country, with all the people taught to think alike?"

One expects something more than the repetition of press propaganda that Russia always says No (p. 182) from the author of a textbook "for use by pupils in the middle and upper forms of grammar schools". But when he elaborates this into a theory of the differences in which "lie the dangers to world peace", his book passes from the ignorant to the pernicious.

Philip's book of maps is a new edition of their well-known wartime collection. A number of the maps have been redrawn and information brought up to date. The dubious history of the original (Mr. Goodall, like Mr. Pickles, is an adherent of the Varangian theory) is retained; unfortunately, the tribute to the "epic struggle of Russia against the armed might of Germany", which prefaced the previous edition, has been dropped, while the "cold war" has coloured the comment on and presentation of a new map on *The Soviet Union in Europe Today*.

Many observers have noted the improvement in the atmosphere of British-Soviet relations in recent months, and the growing interest in each country in the cultural life of the other. It is a pity that this desirable increase in international understanding should be set back by the injection into our schools of such biased works as these.

H.C.C.

CHEKHOV AND OTHER CLASSICS

The Seagull and other plays. Anton Chekhov. New translation by Elisavera Fen. (Penguin Classics, 2/-.)

Russian Short Stories. XIXth Century. Ed. J. Coulsdon and Natalie Duddington. (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 15/-.)

ANYONE who cares to check the average translation from Russian into English knows well enough what he is likely to find. Standards are depressingly low: few translators are really at home in the Russian language, and too many write slipshod and ugly English. Accuracy is seldom to be looked for. One has only to turn to a place-name in an oblique case, and the game is up. Difficult idioms are usually skipped; dialogue turns into the queerest jargon; and very often the pages are sprinkled with misprints. It is therefore a pleasure to welcome this new translation of two major plays and three vaudevilles by Chekhov. The rendering is easy, idiomatic and accurate. Chekhov's long lyrical speeches (as at the close of *Uncle Vanya*) are broken up into shorter sentences more convenient for the English stage. I hope this will become the standard acting version. There is only one trifling complaint to make. Why not use the accepted transliteration, and avoid "Soovorin", "Maryia" and "Toozenbah"?

The second of the Oxford Russian Readers presents Pushkin's *Queen of Spades*, the Taman episode from *A Hero of Our Time*, an excellent short story by Gogol and another by Turgenev, the narrative of Father Zosima from *The Brothers Karamazov*, and the best-known religious tale by Tolstoy. The texts are accented; there is a good vocabulary, with useful notes and a list of selected idioms and difficult constructions. A table of compound verbs is further given, and the stress-shift in the declension of nouns is indicated in the vocabulary. The need for simple and accurate textbooks of this kind is obvious. As they become more plentiful, the standard of translation should rise slowly to the level demanded in the rendering of other languages.

HENRY GIFFORD

YET ANOTHER TRANSLATION OF DOSTOEVSKY

Crime and Punishment. F. M. Dostoevsky. Tr. J. Coulsdon. (Geoffrey Cumberlege. O.U.P., 16/-.)

YET another translation of this famous novel has appeared. It would be superfluous to take up space with a further appreciation of Dostoevsky's masterpiece. On reading the work once more, however, one cannot refrain from surprise at the marked similarity between

the relish with which the author expatiates on the morbid and the criminal, and the sordid gusto of modern sadistic "comics" "dedicated to the ending of crime". One wonders very much whether Dostoevsky's present popularity among the "educated classes" in this country may not be due to a taste for the morbid rendered respectable by a classic reputation, rather than to his work's manifold literary qualities.

The present translation of *Crime and Punishment* reads excellently in English. It is, however, in comparison with Dostoevsky's simple and direct Russian, a somewhat highfalutin and involved English. Moreover, while it is always English and manages to avoid Russianisms, the translator has at times been over-free in interpretation. There is not space here to analyse a large proportion of the translation, but, to take one example, an examination of the murder scene in chapter seven reveals a number of omissions and inaccuracies. In the description of Raskolnikov's absentmindedness after the deed and his clinging to trivialities, we read (p. 77): "However, when he glanced into the kitchen and saw a pail full of water on a bench, it gave him the idea of washing his hands and the axe." The "however" does not make sense. The Russian *vprochem* should have been translated "In fact"; the author is emphasising and exemplifying Raskolnikov's fatal attention to unnecessary detail.

In the conversation between Alyona Ivanovna's two clients, who get no answer when they knock at her door, it is not adequate (p. 79) to translate *glupo, vprochem, uzhasno* as "In fact it's quite absurd"; the *uzhasno* has been ignored, though the man is genuinely aghast at the thought of not being able to get his advance from the moneylender. Later (p. 80) the same client remarks: "It's a long way for me to come here, too." This weakens the whole point and force of what he is saying. The Russian *mne ved' kryuk*, literally "Why, it's a detour for me", can be rendered quite precisely by "Why, I've gone out of my way to get here."

And so on, and so on. For the rest, the book is pleasantly got up and has good clear print.

E.C.H.

PAVLOV: HIS LIFE AND WORK

I. P. Pavlov: His Life and Work. E. A. Asratyan. (FLPH, 3/9.)

THE English-speaking public knows very little about the work of Pavlov. One of the reasons for this is the shortage of material on his work in English. The excellent Anrep translation of *Conditioned Reflexes* is out of print, as is also Frolov's very readable account. The Horsley Gantt translation of the famous *Lectures* is much

more difficult to follow and is not a continuous exposition of Pavlov's teaching.

This new biography and short account of the work of this outstanding Russian and Soviet scientist will therefore be extremely welcome. The reader of Asratyan's new book will only regret that it is not longer. It is well illustrated and produced. The very difficult and complicated subject is handled in a way which makes it intelligible to the ordinary reader and which gives some inkling of the tremendous possibilities for the further happiness of mankind which lie in an extension of Pavlov's life's work.

Pavlov wrote of his teacher : "S. P. Botkin embodied in the highest degree the legitimate and fruitful union between medicine and physiology, these two forms of human activity which are building before our eyes the edifice of the science of the human organism, and promise in the future to furnish man with his greatest happiness—health and life."

Assisted by the tremendous resources placed at their disposal by the Soviet Government, Pavlov's successors are now realising that future. The reader of Asratyan's stimulating account will see, however, that the harvest is only beginning.

B.H.K.

PRIDE WITHOUT SMUGNESS

The Zhurbins. V. Kochetov. (FLPH/Russia Today Book Club.)

MANY eminent men, past and present, have, with great solemnity, predicted the chaos that would be mankind's lot should communism become established. Those who are gone and who in their last hours sought solace by turning their backs and weeping had, if they had cared to look, positive evidence that their lamentations were wasted. The cynics who are with us now have not only documentary evidence before them but the living fact.

The story of *The Zhurbins* has for its background the reconstruction of a shipyard, and through the eyes of the Zhurbins family, old and young, we see the measure of great achievement. Pride without smugness, the product that can come only from free people, abounds within its pages. The old teach the young and the young teach the old. Learning, creating and building together, they reveal the great confidence of the Soviet people, confident not only of the present but of the future. This is the first novel by the author, and only a man of great human understanding could have brought the numerous characters to life with such vivid reality. A novel of the working class which does not have in the foreground the spectre of poverty was for me a refreshing experience. Every working

man should read this novel, for throughout its pages he will identify himself with the characters. Their hopes and fears are his, his the will for peace to build and live.

H. EVANS.

DOBB ON SOVIET ECONOMY

Soviet Economic Development Since 1917. Maurice Dobb. Third edition, 1953. (Routledge and Kegan Paul, 21/-.)

WHEN it was published in 1947, Mr. Dobb's now famous book on Soviet economic development was welcomed by the *Economist* as "by far the most valuable single volume on its subject". Everyone seriously interested in the Soviet Union should read it, and it should be on the shelves of all students of the Soviet economy. This new edition includes a useful short appendix on the results of the Fourth Five-Year Plan and the draft of the Fifth Plan.

R.W.D.

PUBLICATIONS RECEIVED

CHRISTIAN FAITH AND COMMUNISM. Edward Rogers. (Epworth Press, 6d.)

COURAGE. V. Safonov. (FLPH, unpriced.)

EDUCATION IN THE USSR. Y. N. Medynsky. (Soviet News, 6d.)

ISCUS, Vol. 1, No. 1, Jan. 1954. (Indo-Soviet Cultural Society, Rs. 2.)

MARXIST QUARTERLY, No. 1, Jan. 1954. (Lawrence and Wishart, 2/6.)

NAUKA POLSKA, 1, 3. (Polska Akad. Nauk, zl. 20.)

RUSSIA AND THE WEIMAR REPUBLIC. L. Kochan. (Bowes and Bowes, 25/-.)

SOVIET DANCERS IN BRITAIN. (BSFS, 1/6.)

SOVIET STUDIES, Vol. V, Nos. 3 and 4, Jan. and April 1954. (Basil Blackwell, 9/-.)

THE RIGHTS OF MOTHER AND CHILD IN THE USSR. A. Krasnopol'sky and G. Sverdlov. (FLPH, unpriced.)

THIRTY PIECES OF SILVER. Howard Fast (*The Bodley Head*, 7/6.)

TOWARDS ABUNDANCE. (Soviet News, 1d.)

TURGENEV. David Magarshack. (Faber and Faber, 25/-.)

WORKS, Vols. V and VI. J. V. Stalin. (Lawrence and Wishart, 5/- per vol.)

SCR NOTES

LONDON MEETINGS AND OTHER EVENTS

September—December 1953

(All at 14 Kensington Square unless otherwise stated)

January

- 10th: LECTURE. *Soviet Asia: Impressions of a Three-month Visit to the Asian Republics of the USSR*. Dr. ATAL.
- 12th: Chess Demonstration and Lecture. DAVID BRONSTEIN.
- 13th: Triple Simultaneous Chess Display on Sixty Boards. V. ALATORTSEV, D. BRONSTEIN and A. TOLUSH. At the National Chess Centre.
- 14th: As previous item. At the Gambit Café.
- 14th: LECTURE. *Discussions with Soviet Lawyers*. D. N. PRITT, Q.C., and others.
- 24th: RECITAL. PROKOFIEV'S *Seventh Symphony*, etc. Soviet tape-recordings.
- 26th: Annual General Meeting, Education Section.
- 26th: FILM. *My Apprenticeship*. (MAXIM GORKY.)
- 28th: LECTURE. *The Care of Women and Children in the USSR*. Dr. Phyllis DOBBS.

February

- 4th: LECTURE. *The North Ossetian Autonomous Republic*. A. ROTHSTEIN and BRIAN PEARCE.
- 7th: RECITAL. MUSSORGSKY'S *Boris Godunov*. Tape-recording of complete performance by Bolshoi Theatre company.
- 13th: SCR CONFERENCE.
- 18th: LECTURE. *The Beginning of Anglo-Russian Relations in the Sixteenth Century*. K. ANDREWS.
- 21st: FILM SHOW. Five new children's films.
- 21st: RECITAL. CHAIKOVSKY'S *Manfred Symphony*, PROKOFIEV'S *Romeo and Juliet* (third suite), etc. Soviet tape-recordings.
- 23rd: LANTERN LECTURE. *The New Moscow University*. COLIN PENN, A.R.I.B.A.
- 25th: LANTERN LECTURE. *Soviet Education*. Professor J. W. COOK, F.R.S. At the Institute of Education.
- 27th: VECHERINKA (Social Evening).

March

- 4th: LECTURE. *Recent Progress in Soviet Medicine*. Dr. L. CROME.
- 7th: RECITAL. DAVID OISTRAKH playing Mozart and Glazunov; MYASKOVSKY'S *Fifth Symphony*, etc. Tape-recordings.
- 11th: LECTURE. *The USSR Seen by a Teacher of Literature*. Professor J. S. SPINK.
- 17th: FILM. *The Volga-Don Canal*. Introduced by an architect who visited the canal in 1953.
- 21st: SONG RECITAL. DOLUKHANOVA, RAIZEN, etc. Soviet tape-recordings.
- 26th: LECTURE. *Making Life Easier for Soviet Citizens*. A. ROTHSTEIN.

SOVIET CHESS MASTERS' TOUR

Arranged by SCR

THE SCR wishes to place on record its warm appreciation of the readiness with which the Soviet masters—two of whom, Mr. Bronstein and Mr. Tolush, had just emerged from the rigours of the Hastings Congress—accepted the heavy programme of travelling and playing that was proposed for them.

On January 12, Mr. Bronstein and Mr. Tolush, with Mr. V. Alatortsev (Vice-President of the USSR Chess Section) and their interpreter Mr. Zaitsev (himself a first-category player), attended a meeting of the SCR Chess Committee, under the chairmanship of Professor L. S. Penrose, F.R.S. Committee members present included Mr. Golombek, Mr. H. M. Lommer, Mr. Kingsley Martin, Mr. B. Reilly and Mr. R. G. Wade. The Icelandic master, Mr. Olafsson, attended as a visitor.

Prospects for another Anglo-Soviet radio or over-the-board match were discussed at this meeting, as well as exchange of publications and the possibilities of organising correspondence matches between British and Soviet clubs.

After a short and informal dinner, Mr. Bronstein and Mr. Tolush gave a demonstration lecture, Mr. Bronstein showing his game against Dr. Euwe in the candidates' tournament.

On January 13, at the National Chess Centre, the three masters, each taking twenty boards, gave a triple simultaneous display. Some four hundred spectators stood four and five deep on chairs overlooking the boards of Mr. Bronstein's opponents: he won eighteen games, drew one, and lost one, to Mr. M. J. Franklin. Mr. Tolush, playing in whirlwind style, won sixteen games, drew one, and lost four, to Mr. J. C. Thompson, Miss Eileen Tranmer, Mr. Wheatcroft (President of the British Chess Federation) and Mr. B. A. Wilson. (Mr. Tolush had taken twenty-one boards.) Mr. Alatortsev won fifteen games and drew five.

On January 14, a second triple simultaneous display filled the Gambit Café to overflowing. On this occasion Mr. Bronstein played nine boards with clocks—a one-man match—to the stipulation of forty moves a board in two hours, and won all nine games. Mr. Tolush, playing twenty-two boards, won twenty, drew one and lost one, to Mr. S. Fawcett. Mr. Alatortsev won twenty and drew two.

On January 15, in Edinburgh, Mr. Tolush played twenty boards, winning eighteen and losing two, to Mr. D. Munro and Mr. D. Dykes (both of the Wardie Chess Club). Mr. Bronstein spent the day preparing for his TV interview in *Personality Parade* that evening, while Mr. Alatortsev played twenty-one boards against the Ministry of Supply Chess Club, winning twenty and losing one, to Mr. N. Balliol Scott; this was Mr. Alatortsev's only defeat throughout the tour.

On January 16, in Cambridge, the University gave Mr. Bronstein and Mr. Alatortsev a hard struggle. Mr. Bronstein played twenty-five boards, winning twenty-three, drawing one and losing one. Mr. Alatortsev played nineteen boards, winning fourteen and drawing five. In Glasgow, Mr. Tolush played five boards with clocks, and won all five.

We hope that future years will see many similar events; we welcome the choice of Mr. Golombek as judge in the Botvinnik-Smyslov world championship match; and we are happy that chess has done so much to further the cause of cultural relations between two of the great countries of the world.

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